SPECIAL EatingWell EDITION

The New Mediterranean Diet

The World's Healthiest, Best-Tasting Diet

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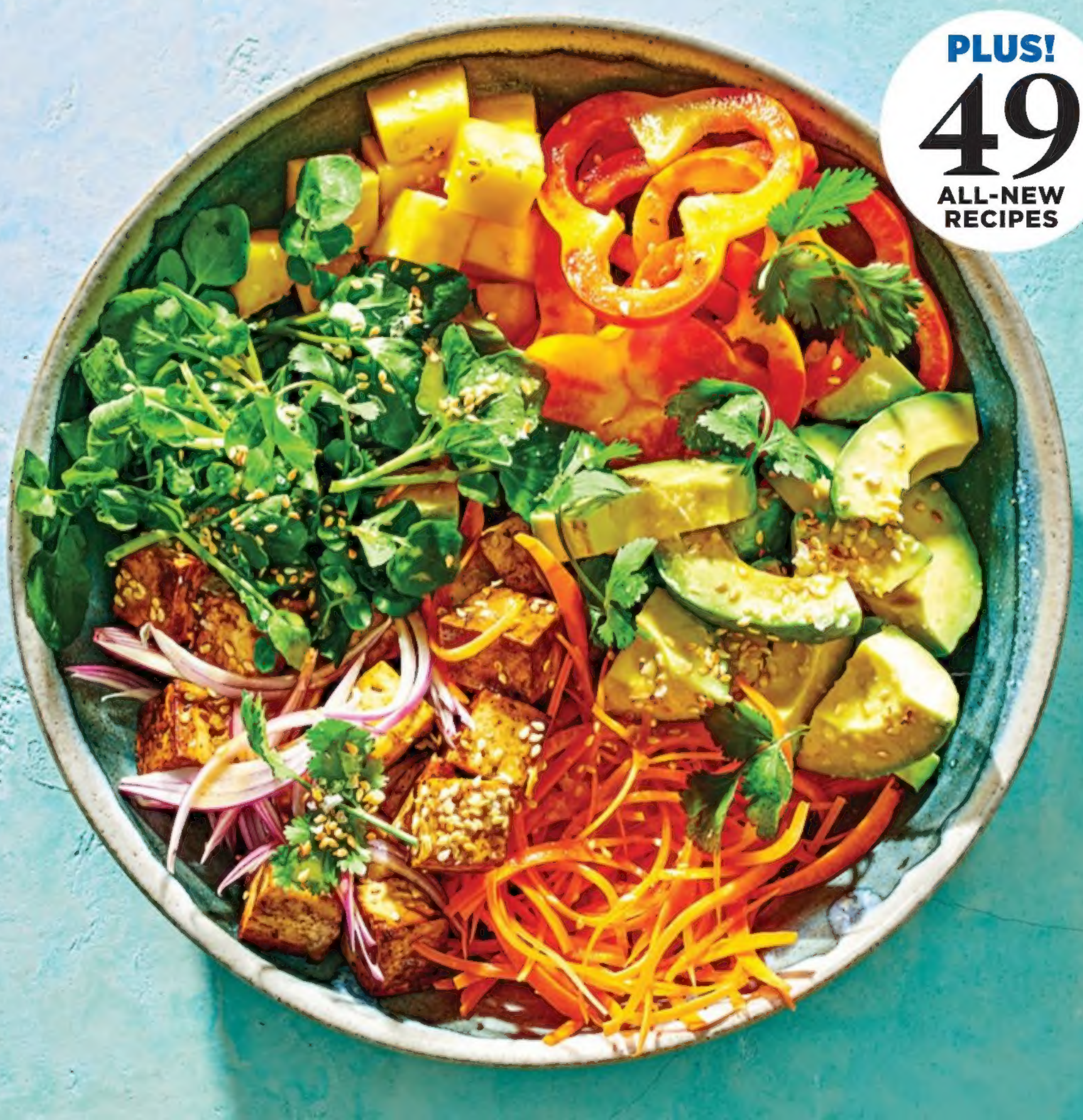

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Contents

4 **The New Mediterranean Diet**

CHAPTER ONE

Getting Started

10 Enduring Principles
16 What I Wish I Knew Before Starting
18 A Lifestyle for Lasting Health
22 The Goodness of Green

CHAPTER TWO

Ingredient Spotlight

26 How to Cook with Whole Grains
32 The Beauty of Variety
34 Super Spices
40 All About Oils
44 The Five Best Fish
48 Budget-Friendly Staples

CHAPTER THREE

Standout Recipes

54 Delicious Mornings
60 Easy Lunches
66 Stories and Perspectives
72 Celebrate the Tin
78 Have a Snack
82 One Pot Wonders
88 Dinner in 25 Minutes or Less

96 Date Night

Parts of this special edition were previously published.

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Ras el Hanout-Spiced Salmon Skewers with Date-Studded Spinach at eatingwell.com/salmonskewers

THE NEW MEDITERRANEAN DIET

It explores even more delicious food and variety—and exciting research promises new brain benefits.

BY ISABEL VASQUEZ, RD, LDN
Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

If you think of the Mediterranean diet as the epitome of healthy eating, you're not alone. It's been rated the best diet by *U.S. News and World Report*—a media company publishing news and rankings based on data to help consumers make well-informed decisions—for seven years and counting, thanks in part to its positive effect on heart health, brain health and longevity. Plus, it's less restrictive and generally more palatable than other diets purported to benefit health. Recommendations for following the Mediterranean diet place an emphasis on healthy fats from nuts, seeds, avocado and olive oil, along with vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, herbs and spices. Fish and seafood are the go-to protein sources and red meat and red wine are recommended in moderation. Yet this isn't an accurate portrayal of the region's diet, because it doesn't account for how people in all of its 21 countries and two territories eat.

An increasing number of health professionals and consumers have been critiquing the Mediterranean diet for its narrow cultural scope. Typical recommendations around the diet (which stem from a study that took place in the 1950s) overlook other cultures around the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, and the rest of the world. They take a white, Eurocentric lens, uplifting the traditional cuisines of France, Italy and Greece and prioritizing the assumed taste preferences of white Americans, while ignoring the other 19 countries and two territories of the Mediterranean region.

EatingWell has been covering the Mediterranean diet for years, and we're focused on expanding the understanding and recommendations around it

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Tomato Dolma with Roasted Eggplant (Köz Patlicani Domates Dolmasi) at eatingwell.com/dolma

to be as diverse as the countries and cultures within this vast region and beyond. We're calling it the *New Mediterranean Diet*. The principles are the same, but this version celebrates healthy foods and dishes from cultures across the globe and emphasizes the emerging research-backed benefits for brain health.

Widening Reach

The Mediterranean Diet is an extremely healthy way to eat, but it's not the only healthy approach. "There are so many other diet patterns and cultural diets that provide the same health benefits," says Anjali Prasertong M.P.H., RDN, a public health dietitian who runs a Substack called Antiracist Dietitian, about the intersection of nutrition and racial equity. "We just haven't heard about them, because they were not chosen as the healthiest diet by the Seven Countries study and subsequently studied for years thereafter."

The Seven Countries study was a landmark study led by physiologist Ancel Keys that took place from 1958 to 1999. It examined how diet and other lifestyle factors were associated with coronary heart disease in seven countries: the U.S., Finland, the Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and Japan. The study gave rise to what we now call the Mediterranean diet because it revealed that Greek and Italian dietary patterns were associated with reduced rates of coronary heart disease and all-cause mortality.

But the Mediterranean diet has never been representative of all of the countries in the Mediterranean region, which includes Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and others.

The foundational nutrients of the Mediterranean diet can be found in any number of cultural cuisines. For example, "A traditional Moroccan tagine, rich in vegetables and spices, offers a variety of nutrients, while a Lebanese tabbouleh provides an excellent source of antioxidants and fiber," says Rizwan Bashir, M.D., a board-certified neurologist at AICA Orthopedics. Furthermore, the cultural cuisines of Japan, South Korea, China, Iceland and many Caribbean islands include lots of fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Additionally, some of the countries with the highest consumption of legumes—another staple food group in the Mediterranean diet—are Afghanistan, Japan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Israel, Brazil and Panama, per a 2022 study in *Nutrients*. All of this goes to show that the Mediterranean diet principles can be practiced through enjoying other regions' cultural dishes.

Evolving Research

Despite the bias in Keys' study, the years of research that followed confirmed the benefits of following the principles of the Mediterranean diet. For instance, a large landmark study called the PREDIMED trial, which evaluated the benefits of the Mediterranean diet for heart and brain health, found that of the 7,000-plus participants with high cardiovascular risk, those assigned to follow a Mediterranean diet had fewer cardiovascular events than those assigned to follow a reduced-fat diet. The thought is that this eating pattern addresses oxidative stress, chronic inflammation and vascular impairment. Though the PREDIMED trial had flaws, concerns with the original research methods

were addressed in 2018. They were largely around problematic randomization processes, which are important to prevent accidental bias in the results. The 2018 update addressed these issues by reanalyzing the results and removing 1,588 participants who may not have been properly randomized. The updated findings concluded that the positive health results of the Mediterranean diet still held true.

More recent research confirms the cardiovascular benefits of the Mediterranean diet. A 2023 review in *Nutrients* found that the Mediterranean diet can decrease the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and also reduce mortality risk in both those with preexisting cardiovascular disease and the general population.

The fiber, prebiotics and B vitamins you get from common foods in the Mediterranean diet, such as legumes and whole grains, also support gut health. A 2020 study in *Nutrients* found that those who followed the Mediterranean diet had a more diverse gut microbiome than those following a typical Western diet (with less fiber and more ultra-processed foods), which is an indicator of gut health. In recent years, researchers have found that the health and diversity of your gut microbiome also impacts immune health. About 70 percent of your immune cells are located in your gut, so a diverse microbiome helps protect against infectious disease and attack harmful pathogens. Plus, thanks to the gut-brain connection, your gut health can also impact brain health. The bacteria in your gut interact with neurotransmitters and neuropeptides that play a role in mood and behavior, such as serotonin and dopamine, through the vagus nerve and neuroendocrine system.

New Understanding of Brain Health

About 1 in 9 U.S. adults ages 45 and older report increased confusion and worsening memory, an experience known as subjective cognitive decline, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. When it comes to adults ages 65 and older, 1 in 9 live with Alzheimer's. With our aging population, these brain-health conditions are on the rise. "As individuals age, their brain may experience structural changes, including shrinkage in certain areas and a decline in neurotransmitter activity," says Bashir. Even if you're not 45 yet, Maggie Moon, RD, a brain-health nutrition expert and best-selling author of *The MIND Diet,* recommends taking brain health seriously, since the effects of diet on brain health begin in utero. She says that the time lapse between what we eat and its impact on memory and cognition spans decades, so it's never too soon to start.

"What's good for the heart is good for the brain," Moon says. A 2023 review in *Frontiers in Neuroscience* found that a Mediterranean diet may reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's. It also found that the diet may even slow progression of the disease for those already diagnosed, an exciting finding, since most research has focused on prevention rather than treatment. The Mediterranean diet has even been combined with the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet to create the MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay), diet, geared at optimizing brain health. A 2023 study in *JAMA Psychiatry* found that middle-aged and older adults who followed the MIND diet had a lower risk of dementia.

What's more, a 2023 study in *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research* found that a modified Korean MIND (K-MIND) diet led to improvements in the "orientation to place" of elderly women with mild cognitive impairment. Researchers believe the diet helps curb inflammatory markers and enhance genes important for brain health. Unlike the traditional Mediterranean diet, the K-MIND diet includes perilla oil rather than olive oil, adds milk or fermented milk (e.g., kefir) and excludes wine. Perilla oil is made using cold-pressed seeds of the perilla plant, and it's commonly eaten in Korea, China and Japan. It's popularly used for sautéing vegetables or noodles. Nutritionally, it's similar to other cooking oils, but it's actually higher in omega-3 fatty acids than olive oil. This goes to show that the benefits of the Mediterranean diet can hold true with culturally relevant modifications.

So if you're interested in adopting a more health-promoting diet for brain health, heart health and longevity, think twice before abandoning your own cultural foods or neglecting your taste preferences. While the Mediterranean diet is linked with lots of health benefits, experts say cultural eating patterns throughout the world are likely also great for your health.

Getting Started

Experts explain what foods and key lifestyle habits are crucial to the New Mediterranean Diet. Plus, tips for lasting success.

ENDURING PRINCIPLES

While the Mediterranean diet is evolving, certain cornerstones of the eating pattern have stood the test of time.

BY JESSICA MIGALA AND JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD
Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

Perennially named one of the world's healthiest eating patterns, the Mediterranean diet is abundant in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and healthy fats. It features fish and poultry—lean protein sources—over red meat. Red wine is consumed regularly but in moderate amounts.

Research suggests that the benefits of this eating pattern are many: improved outcomes for intentional weight loss, better management of blood glucose (sugar) levels and reduced risk of cognitive decline, to name a few. The Mediterranean diet has also been associated with reduced levels of inflammation, a risk factor for heart attacks, stroke and Alzheimer's disease.

And according to a 2020 review in *Clinical Practice & Epidemiology in Mental Health*, following this eating pattern may also improve the outcomes of depression and anxiety.

As a quick reminder, you don't have to eat only foods from the Mediterranean region to reap these benefits—the diet's principles can be applied to any cuisine. Nor do you need to overhaul your shopping and eating habits. Wiping the slate clean may not be necessary, nor is it sustainable. These principles should be delicious and easy to stick to.

Here, we outline steps you can take to incorporate more of the principles of the Mediterranean diet into your current eating pattern. Choose one of the strategies and make it a habit. When you're ready, move on to the next strategy.

No matter where you choose to begin, these

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Baked Kale Salad with Crispy Quinoa at eatingwell.com/kalesalad

eight tips for starting a Mediterranean diet can help you reap the health benefits.

1. Cook with Healthy Oils

Olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fatty acids, which may improve HDL cholesterol, the "good" type. HDL cholesterol ferries "bad" LDL particles out of arteries, per a 2019 study in *Nutrition, Metabolism and Cardiovascular Diseases.* Use olive oil in homemade salad dressings and vinaigrettes. Drizzle it on dishes like fish or chicken to boost flavor. Every now and then, swap butter for olive oil in mashed potatoes and pasta.

There are a handful of other healthy oils that you can use if olive oil is inching out of your budget or is not in stock where you shop. Peanut oil is rich in resveratrol, a heart-healthy antioxidant that can help reduce risk for heart disease and stroke. Since peanut oil has a high smoke point, it can take the heat when you use it for stir-frying, searing and baking. Sesame oil has a nutty flavor and is potent in sesamol and sesaminol, two heart-healthy antioxidants that may decrease risk for heart disease, certain cancers and liver conditions.

2. Have More Fish

Fish is a welcome part of the Mediterranean diet. In particular, the diet emphasizes fatty fish including salmon, sardines, tuna and mackerel, which are rich in heart- and brain-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Fish that are leaner and have less fat, such

as cod or tilapia, are still worth eating, as they provide a good source of protein. And tinned fish is equally nutritious, plus it's a budget-friendly and sometimes more accessible option.

If you currently don't get a lot of fish in your diet, an easy point of entry is to designate one day each week as fish night. Cooking fish in parchment paper or foil packets is one no-fuss, no-mess way to put dinner on the table. You can also try incorporating fish into some of your favorite dishes, such as tacos, stir-fries, soups and salads.

Omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to help reduce anxiety, according to 2018 research in *JAMA Network Open*. In addition, people across numerous sample groups who got more omega-3s into their diet—via salmon or vegetarian sources like flax and nuts—scored lower on ratings of perceived stress and mental distress, according to additional research in the *FASEB Journal* in 2022.

As the *JAMA Network Open* study points out, omega-3s may affect neurotransmitters (chemical messengers) and improve neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to form new connections) as well as reduce inflammation, the researchers posit.

3. Eat Veggies All Day Long

If you look at your diet and worry that there's barely a green to be seen, this is the perfect opportunity to fit in more veggies. A good way to do it is to eat one serving at snack time—like crunching on bell pepper strips or throwing a handful of dark leafy greens into a smoothie—and one serving at dinner, such as steamed butternut squash or honey-chile-glazed baked Brussels sprouts. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020–2025 recommend you aim for at least 2.5 cups of veggies per day.

Eating plenty of veggies in general is linked to a less stressful life overall, per 2023 research in *Clinical Nutrition*. Participants who packed the most produce into their diet (more than a pound per day) had 10 percent lower scores on a perceived stress questionnaire than those who ate the lowest amount (about 8 ounces per day or less). For reference, two stalks of celery weigh about 4 ounces, according to the FDA. This association held true for middle-aged adults but not for younger or older adults, however. Another limitation of this study is that it lacked diversity and so is not representative of a global population.

Produce, whether fresh, frozen or canned, offers several perks, including antioxidants and plant compounds called polyphenols, both of which may quell oxidative stress and inflammation, in turn helping mitigate psychological stress, the study authors say.

4. Help Yourself to Whole Grains

Experiment with whole grains that are still in their "whole" form and haven't been refined. Quinoa

cooks up in just 15 minutes, making it a great side dish for weeknight meals. Barley is full of fiber, and it's filling: Pair it with mushrooms for a steamy, satisfying soup. A hot bowl of oatmeal is perfect for breakfast on a cold winter morning, and overnight oats are easily made ahead.

Even popcorn is a whole grain—just keep it healthy by eating air-popped corn and limiting the butter (try a drizzle of olive oil instead). Supplement your intake with other whole grains and whole-grain products, like millet, fonio, whole-wheat bread, corn tortillas and pasta.

Look for the "whole" or "whole grain" on packaging and in the ingredient list—it should be listed first. If you still find it too hard to make the switch from your old refined favorites, phase in a whole grain by using whole-grain blends of pasta and rice or mixing a whole grain with a refined one (like half whole-wheat pasta and half white).

Keep fresh fruit visible at home, and take a piece or two to work for a nutritious snack when your stomach starts growling.

Whole grains also provide an excellent source of sleep-supporting magnesium. Foods like couscous, quinoa, bulgur wheat, brown rice and wild rice are excellent sources of the complex carbohydrates our bodies need for energy. These whole, minimally processed grains are typically high in fiber, have a low glycemic index and help regulate blood-glucose levels—all associated with promoting healthy sleep.

5. Snack on Nuts

Nuts are another Mediterranean diet staple, and they provide an array of benefits. Grabbing a handful, whether it's almonds, cashews, peanuts or pecans, can make for a satisfying, on-the-go snack. One 2023 study in the journal *Nutrients* found that people who snacked on mixed nuts lowered their blood pressure and heart rate, reduced their weight and felt more satisfied than those who snacked on pretzels. (Choose unsalted and unsweetened nuts more often than salted, glazed or chocolate-coated.)

All nuts are packed with B vitamins and potassium, nutrients that help lower blood pressure and stress. But walnuts in particular are good at buffering the effects of stress, according to a small 2022 study in *Nutrients*. Researchers looked at stressed-out (and, consequently, moody) university students and found that something interesting happened when they ate 2 ounces of walnuts per day for four months: They had better mental health and sleep and less stress and depression compared to a control group. One reason? Stress is associated with lower gut bacteria diversity, a marker of gut health, which plays a role in mental wellness and mood.

Eating walnuts, on the other hand, may help improve your gut health, decreasing your risk of depression and anxiety. Keep in mind that this study looked at a limited population and may not be generalizable across life span, culture, or race and ethnicity.

6. Reach for Fruit for Dessert

Generally a good source of fiber, vitamins and antioxidants, fruits are a nutritious way to satisfy your sweet tooth. If a touch of sweetness helps you eat more fruit, try drizzling slices of pear with honey or sprinkling a little brown sugar on grapefruit. Keep fresh fruit visible at home, and take a piece or two to work so you have a nutritious snack when your stomach starts growling. Lots of grocery stores stock fruits you might not be familiar with—pick a new one to try each week and expand your fruit horizons.

7. Enjoy Your Sweet Treats

You knew there was a reason why you want to reach for chocolate when stressed: The sweet treat may, in fact, be the antidote you need to find more calm, per 2022 research in the *Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry*. In a study conducted at Seoul National University, adults who ate about 1 ounce of 85%-cocoa chocolate daily for three weeks experienced fewer negative emotions compared to a control group who didn't eat chocolate, as well as a group who ate 70% dark chocolate.

The study also found that eating 85% dark chocolate was associated with gut bacteria diversity, as well as with an abundance of a

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Everything-Seasoned Almonds at eatingwell.com/almonds

specific bacteria called *Blautia obeum*, a potential good-mood bacteria. The researchers think that dark chocolate acts as a prebiotic, which essentially fuels good bacteria that keep your gut healthy.

8. Savor Every Bite

The Mediterranean diet is as much a lifestyle as it is a diet. Instead of gobbling your meal in front of the TV, slow down and sit at the table with your family and friends to savor what you're eating. Not only will you enjoy your company and your food, but eating slowly also allows you to tune in to your body's hunger and fullness signals. You're more apt to eat just until you're satisfied than until you're busting-at-the-seams full.

The Bottom Line

You don't need to overhaul the way you eat to follow the Mediterranean diet—rather, you can make small tweaks, one step at a time. Whether it's cooking more often with healthy oils, adding more whole grains into meals or savoring every bite, there are many ways to incorporate the Mediterranean diet into your life while still eating dishes from your favorite cuisines.

What I Wish I Knew Before Starting

Learn from my experience following the Mediterranean diet.

BY JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD
Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

LET ME BEGIN by saying I am not "on a diet." That said, the way I eat aligns pretty closely with a Mediterranean eating pattern. The Mediterranean diet places an emphasis on ample produce, whole grains, healthy fats and a mix of plant and animal proteins. The combo of nutrients, whole foods and being able to eat the flavors you like make following the Mediterranean diet—one of the healthiest eating patterns in the world—super easy.

I have been eating this way for a while, basically since a short stint eating vegan in college. The types of foods I buy and meals I make are second nature now.

The diet emphasizes the foods you include rather than excluding food groups or counting calories. This makes it more broad than you might think but can also make it a little overwhelming at first.

Learn from my experience with these six things I wish I'd known before starting the Mediterranean diet.

1. It doesn't have to be all Mediterranean foods. Just because the diet is called "Mediterranean" doesn't mean that you can only eat recipes that use ingredients that are popular in the Mediterranean. Any type of cuisine can work with this eating pattern. As long as you include ample vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats and showcase proteins like fish, legumes and poultry, you are in line with the goals of the diet. Healthy eating does not discriminate!

2. A little planning goes a long way. I've never been a meal prepper, but I do plan my menu each week. Not only does this help me plan for busier days, but it also helps me save money at the store because I'm buying only what I need.

Even if you don't plan every day of the week, some meal planning will help set you up for success, especially if you are making a change in your eating. It will be easier to have nutritious meals and snacks at the ready that feature staple ingredients of the Mediterranean diet.

3. Include your friends and family. Though the Mediterranean diet is focused on what's on your plate, there are lifestyle choices associated with it, too. Being physically active and enjoying meals with others are both central to this eating pattern. Share a meal with friends when you can, and make time to regularly get around the table with those in your household.

There are so many reasons why it's important to carve out time for family meals. It helps you have a healthier relationship with food, it can improve kids' performance in school, and it can even help people maintain a healthier weight. Plus, it can help everyone feel supported.

4. Don't strive for perfection. Eating patterns need to be sustainable. This is a big part of why diets (especially strict ones) don't work. Just like your schedule can change day to day, so can your body's needs. Get a lot of movement on a given day and feel more hungry? Listen to your body. Long holiday weekend during which you weren't eating as you normally do? That's life, and it's totally OK! Instead of obsessing over every morsel of food you eat, give yourself some grace. What matters is what you do most of the time. One meal or snack that is not in line with your

eating goals will |not derail a healthy eating plan. Enjoy out-of-the-ordinary meals and then get back on track when you can.

5. Adapt recipes you already make.
Trying to overhaul your entire life and eating pattern is a good way to set yourself up for failure. Instead, small changes over time can lead to big results. Adapting foods you already eat to meet the parameters of the Mediterranean diet is a great way to make the eating pattern sustainable for you.

For example, try adding additional vegetables to pastas or stir-fries. Blend greens, legumes and yogurt into smoothies for a nutrition boost. Swap out red meat for salmon on a salad, or choose shrimp over steak the next time you grill. Little things can compound for an overall healthier diet.

6. Ask for recommendations.
If you know other people who follow a Mediterranean-style eating pattern, ask them for ideas and advice. When I was starting out, so many other dietitians and colleagues shared their favorite recipes with me. Some of them have become staples in my routine, like shakshuka. Beyond recipes, getting tips about meal planning, shopping, eating out and more from friends with experience is super helpful. Even if it doesn't all work for you, you will more than likely gain some information you wouldn't have otherwise.

A LIFESTYLE FOR LASTING HEALTH

No matter where you live or which genes you were born with, these healthy habits are easy to add to your daily routine.

BY KARLA WALSH
Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

While the Mediterranean diet tends to get most of the glory in the health landscape—as the best diet of 2023, as a way of life that's ideal to support heart health and as a terrific option for individuals diagnosed with type 2 diabetes—it's not the only lifestyle that can help boost longevity.

There are people from a handful of communities across the globe who live just as long, says Dan Buettner, a Miami-based National Geographic fellow and the author of *The Blue Zones American Kitchen: 100 Recipes to Live to 100.* As the founder of the Blue Zones project in 2000, he brought together medical researchers, anthropologists, demographers and epidemiologists to help distill data from the world's longest-lived groups of people to discover their secrets.

The Blue Zones team has built upon those conclusions using evidence-based data from the past 20 years to land on several lifestyle factors that play into longevity.

It's not just about genetics, Buettner says, citing the 1996 Danish Twin Study published in *Human Genetics,* which established that only about 20 percent of how long a person lives is based on genetics.

"This leaves the other 80 percent up to lifestyle and environment," he says. "So while genetics can play a role, it's important for people to focus more on what they can control or change and setting up their routine and environments."

What Are the Blue Zones?

There are five known Blue Zones in the world—Okinawa, Japan; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece; Loma Linda, California; and Sardinia, Italy—and

just two of them are considered part of the Mediterranean region.

"In these five regions, the population overwhelmingly lives to be 100 years or older. Not only that, but these folks are living healthier—not just longer—lives," says Caroline Thomason, RD, CDCES, a Warrenton, Virginia–based registered dietitian who helps women stop dieting and find confidence with food. "While folks in the U.S. live to be much older than in previous generations, we certainly are not always in good health at the end of our days."

You become what you do, as the old adage says, and daily routines do add up to move the needle toward (or away from) well-being. That said, you shouldn't take everything into your own hands and abandon expert intel and regular checkups, advises Margaret Fruhbauer, D.O., a board-certified internal medicine doctor with Northwest Community Healthcare in Buffalo Grove, Illinois.

1. Don't "Diet"—Instead, Eat Until You're Mostly Satisfied

Skip the detox or cleanse. Instead, try to follow *hara hachi bu,* keeping a wide variety of nutritious (and local, if possible) foods in the mix. This mindset is a key factor in Okinawa, where the 2,500-year-old Confucian mantra reminds locals to enjoy meals and snacks until their stomach is 80 percent full rather than counting calories or crash dieting. "Almost all of the foods consumed by centenarians in the Blue Zones grow within a 10-mile radius of their homes," Buettner says, but any whole grains, nuts, seeds, beans, legumes, fruits and vegetables will serve your health well.

According to a February 2022 meta-analysis in the journal *PLOS Medicine,* those who "adopt a diet of whole grains, legumes, fish, fruits, vegetables and a handful of nuts, while reducing red and processed meats, sugar-sweetened beverages and refined grains" starting at age 20 may be able to add more than 10 years to their life expectancy. Of course, we can't control all health outcomes, and healthy eating isn't a cure-all, but even if a person started these strategies at 60, the data suggests they might expect to add about eight and a half years to their life.

Consider frozen, canned or fermented foods if your fresh faves aren't accessible. And if you're not sure where to start, Fruhbauer suggests outsourcing, asking for help and tapping tools that make healthy eating easier, such as local food access organizations or a dietitian affiliated with your doctor's office.

2. Limit Added Sugars

Eating less ultra-processed food likely means you'll naturally consume fewer grams of added sugars. Buettner confirms that people in the Blue Zones eat sugar intentionally, not by habit or accident.

"They consume about the same amount of naturally occurring sugars as North Americans do, but only about a fifth as much added sugar—no more than 7 teaspoons a day," he says. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American adults, on average, consume about 17 teaspoons of added sugar each day, which is more than twice the recommended amount. Much of this added sugar hides out in sources such as sugar-sweetened drinks, yogurt, breakfast cereal and plant-based milk, to name a few.

3. Cook at Home More

About 60 percent of Americans eat dinner out at least once each week, the CDC estimates, and a 2019 survey by the research group Fourth found that 10 percent eat out four to six times per week. While those living in the Blue Zones do occasionally dine out, they're known to take pride in making cooking an event. For instance, in some households, meals often come with multiple courses of family recipes made with love.

If you cook more at home, you will have more control over the ingredients you use, you may naturally eat smaller portions and you'll score the stress-relieving benefits of creating something from scratch. Plus, compared with peers who eat out less than once a week, individuals who frequently eat meals prepared away from home—two or more meals a day—may have a higher risk of all-cause mortality, according to a 2021 study published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.*

4. Share Food with Others

Now that you've cooked your meal, you can score even more wellness gains by sharing it with others. "The world's longest-lived people chose—or were

born into—social circles that supported healthy behaviors," Buettner says. "Okinawans created *moais*, or groups of five friends that committed to each other for life.

"Research from the Framingham Studies shows that smoking, obesity, happiness and even loneliness are contagious, too," he adds. "The social networks of long-lived people have favorably shaped their health behaviors."

A February 2021 meta-analysis in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that families who share meals tend to consume more fruits, vegetables and health-promoting nutrients. The quality of the nutrition isn't the only benefit: A March 2017 study in the journal *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology* reported that dining with friends or family is linked with feeling happier, being more engaged with the community, being more satisfied with life, feeling more trusting of others and laughing more.

5. Get Moving Daily

"The world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons or join gyms. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it," Buettner says. Things like tending to the garden and keeping up with house and yard work without high-tech tools add in significant daily movement.

Whether you find joy in hiking while listening to your favorite podcast, prefer to spend time tending your vegetable garden or enjoy walking around the neighborhood to chill out after a long day, moving more has been shown to improve mood through the boost of natural feel-good neurotransmitters known as endorphins.

Cardio, resistance training, yoga, tai chi, Pilates or any activity can bolster balance, increase strength, burn calories and reduce the risk for depression, heart disease and more, according to Fruhbauer. Your local community center may offer fun classes you could attend.

6. Prioritize Your Sleep and Stress Relief

Chronic sleep deprivation can increase everything from pain related to migraines and fibromyalgia to risk for heart disease and cancer, Fruhbauer explains. Buettner adds that a constant or frequent barrage of stressors (ahem, constant phone pings and frightening or tension-filled news updates) can trigger chronic inflammation, which is associated with every major age-related disease.

According to Buettner, many people in the long-lived Blue Zone communities have common routines that help shed stress, such as taking a few moments to remember their ancestors, praying, taking naps and gathering for happy hours. Many of these involve some aspect of social community, which can amplify the benefits.

Fruhbauer suggests scheduling time for self-care, the same way you would plan for an oil change or haircut. Creating a commitment three days a week for even 15-minute periods can make an impact over time.

Walking, meditation and breathing are science-backed and free ways to reduce stress and promote sound sleep. Putting away electronic devices 30 to 60 minutes before snooze time, eating more sleep-supporting foods and following good bedroom design tips can all make a difference in your rest success.

The Goodness of Green

This minor modification might make the heart-healthy diet even better, for you *and* the planet.

BY KARLA WALSH

Reviewed by dietitian Victoria Seaver, M.S., RD

RICH IN FIBER, color, omega-3 fats and whole grains, the Mediterranean diet has been shown by hundreds—if not thousands—of studies to be a boon for your brain, heart, gut and longevity.

But what if a few tiny tweaks of the plan could make it even better for you—and Mother Nature? That's what proponents of the "green" Mediterranean diet, which involves eschewing all meat and leaning into even more greens, believe their new diet can do.

Animal-based foods account for about 57 percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions, per a September 2021 study in the journal *Nature,* while plant-based foods account for about 29 percent. If everyone decided to go vegan tomorrow, the amount of farmland required to feed the world would be reduced by about 76 percent, according to a June 2018 study in *Science*.

"Eliminating meat intake—beef, pork, lamb—is by far the most important single way to reduce the carbon footprint from diet. The contribution of meat to greenhouse gas emissions is enormous compared with other foods," Meir Stampfer, Ph.D., a professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston and one of the authors of the green Mediterranean diet studies, told *Medical News Today*.

Plus, those who eat little to no meat tend to have a lower risk for certain types of cancer, reports a study published in *BMC Medicine* in February 2022.

Going Green

A traditional Mediterranean diet promotes "eating the rainbow" via large amounts of fruits and vegetables and whole grains, as well as healthy fats from nuts, seeds and olive oil. It includes moderate amounts of dairy, fish and red wine, plus lower amounts of red meat and eggs (less than the standard American diet), processed foods, refined grains and added sugars.

The resulting combo is potent in polyphenols, heart-healthy unsaturated fats and fiber, which helps lower bad cholesterol, improve insulin sensitivity and reduce chronic inflammation.

The "green" addition takes this plan and strips it of meat, promoting plant-based proteins instead. You can still eat some fish and poultry, along with dairy, and the diet encourages green tea, walnuts and Mankai duckweed. Scientists behind a November 2020 study published in the journal *Heart* say this combination might amplify the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet even more.

To study this, the researchers tapped 294 people with an average age of 51 (at the start of the trial) and abdominal obesity to embark on one of three diets. The first was an overall healthy diet. The second was a calorie-restricted classic Mediterranean diet that included less red meat and 28 grams of walnuts, or ¼ cup per day. Walnuts are the only tree nut that is an excellent source of the plant-based omega-3 essential fatty acid called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA).

The final diet was a calorie-restricted green Mediterranean diet that included ¼ cup of walnuts per day, 3 to 4 cups of green tea and 100 grams of a Mankai duckweed shake, as well as no red or processed meats and little, if any, poultry.

Mankai is a tiny vegetable that's often sold in supplemental form due to its ability to replace all of the essential amino acids and vitamin B_{12}

Mixed Greens with Preserved Lemon Dressing & Feta at eatingwell.com/greens

in meat. As part of this study, the Mankai was just a test—other plant proteins would work as well, the researchers say. "You can easily get all the protein you need without eating any meat, or without eating any animal products," Stampfer told *Medical News Today*.

Bountiful Benefits

After the study had been going on six months, both Mediterranean diets led to more weight loss and greater metabolic wins than the standard "eat healthy" advice. The green Mediterranean diet was correlated with the largest reduction in waist circumference and other biomarkers of heart disease risk, including lower blood pressure, lower bad cholesterol, better insulin sensitivity and less chronic inflammation.

A follow-up study, published in January 2021, determined that a green Mediterranean diet can also help people lose fat in their liver—a very important factor for everyone, especially the 25 percent of people who have non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, which can progress into cirrhosis and liver failure.

One additional study, published in January 2022 in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition,* looked at the possible brain benefits of going green, and the researchers found that both Mediterranean menus slowed the shrinkage of the hippocampus, the part of the brain that impacts our ability to learn and remember. A green Mediterranean diet appeared to offer the most protection against brain atrophy. Over time, that could mean a lower risk for dementia.

The researchers believe that eating less red and processed meat and more polyphenols may be the reason behind the bonus benefits of going green.

The Bottom Line

Our on-staff dietitians are ardent supporters of any style of the Mediterranean diet, so if you're interested in having a lower eco-impact and possibly more brain, heart and overall health benefits, it certainly can't hurt to consider giving the green Mediterranean menu a shot.

That being said, one of the key components of the Mediterranean diet is how easy it is to follow. So if you find yourself struggling to get by with less meat, don't feel like you need to give it up completely. Simply eating less can have potential benefits, too.

Since iron, vitamin B_{12}, vitamin D, calcium and other vitamins and minerals are often part of our diet thanks to meat and dairy foods, it's important to work with a dietitian and your doctor anytime you're embarking on a nearly or completely vegan diet such as the green Mediterranean diet. It is possible to cover your nutritional needs without supplementation, but it takes some planning and a savvy menu strategy.

Ingredient Spotlight

Explore the cornerstone foods of the New Mediterranean Diet, including how to buy, cook and enjoy them all.

HOW TO COOK WITH WHOLE GRAINS

Cash in on the benefits with our primer on whole grains, including cooking times and liquid ratios for barley, brown rice, farro, millet and more.

BY MEGAN O. STEINTRAGER
Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

Trying to eat more whole grains? Keep trying! They offer so many health benefits. Unrefined grains, such as quinoa, millet and brown rice, provide a healthy boost of vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants and phytonutrients. Nutty-tasting, hearty whole grains make a delicious and satisfying base for all sorts of easy meals, including healthy grain bowls, fried rice, soups, grain salads, burritos and burrito bowls, breakfast porridges and more.

Grains are also rich in carbohydrates, which are the body's main fuel supply, so we need a fair amount daily. The key is to keep portions moderate and skew strongly toward whole-grain versions as often as you can. While the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020–2025 recommend making at least half of your grains whole, we say aim for making most, if not all, of your grains whole. You'll feel fuller longer, because their fiber takes longer to digest. And once you've made the transition to whole grains, you might find that you prefer their robust flavor to that of their refined counterparts.

The first place to look for whole grains, especially more common ones like bulgur and barley, is near the rice at most markets. Less-common grains can be found in the bulk bins at well-stocked markets and natural-foods stores. Oats, brown rice and quinoa are just some of the readily available, budget-friendly options you can add to your diet. Here are some shopping tips, basic prep and cooking instructions for 16 popular whole grains.

Amaranth

With origins in Mexico, Central and South America, amaranth is a tiny seed that measures just

1 millimeter across. This grain can be used in a variety of ways, from baked goods to breakfast cereals. It can even be popped, like corn, for a healthy snack. It has a mild earthy, nutty flavor and a delicate crunch. **TO COOK AMARANTH:** Bring 1½ cups water (or broth) to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add 1 cup amaranth and reduce heat to a simmer. Simmer, covered, until the water is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Makes 2½ cups.

Barley

Barley's chewiness makes it great in classic beef and barley soup, but this grain is also delicious in salads, pilaf and many recipes that are typically made with rice. Barley has a tough hull that is difficult to remove without losing some of the bran. Hulled barley, available at natural-foods stores, retains more of the whole-grain nutrients but cooks slowly. More readily available, and more convenient, are pearl barley (the bran has been removed) and quick-cooking barley (parboiled). Technically, neither are whole grains, but nutritionally speaking they count toward your whole-grain servings because of their high fiber content. **TO COOK PEARL BARLEY:** Bring 1 cup pearl barley and 2½ cups water (or broth) to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer; cook, covered, until tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed, 40 to 50 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes. Makes 3 to 3½ cups.

Brown Rice

Just about any recipe that can be made with white rice can also be made with brown rice—and there are dozens of healthy brown rice recipes to prove it! Brown rice has been minimally processed, just enough to sort and remove the inedible outer husk,

leaving the nutritious outer bran layer intact. You can find brown versions of most types of rice, including short, medium and long grain, jasmine and basmati. **TO COOK BROWN RICE:** Bring 1 cup brown rice and 2½ cups water (or broth) to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, until tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed, 40 to 50 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes, then fluff with a fork. Makes 3 cups. (You can also find quick-cooking or instant brown rice, which is ready in 5 to 10 minutes. Follow the cooking instructions on the package.)

Buckwheat

Buckwheat, which is native to countries in Asia, has a nutty flavor. This whole grain can be enjoyed as is to make porridge. It can also be ground into flour, which is then used to make a variety of savory dishes, from bread to soba noodles. Buckwheat is a good source of fiber and can also be used in baked goods such as tarts, cakes, brownies and pancakes. **TO COOK BUCKWHEAT:** Bring 2 cups water (or broth) and 1 cup buckwheat to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer until liquid is absorbed, about 10 minutes. Makes 4 cups.

Bulgur

Browse through our healthy bulgur recipes and you'll find classic uses, like tabbouleh, but also casseroles. Bulgur is available in fine, medium and coarse textures. (If it's not labeled, it's usually fine or medium.) Unless a recipe calls for a specific texture, any type can be used. Don't confuse bulgur with cracked wheat, which is simply that—cracked wheat. Cracked wheat must be cooked for up to an hour; bulgur is cracked wheat that's been parboiled, so it simply needs to soak in hot water for most uses. **TO COOK BULGUR:** Bring 1 cup bulgur and 1½ cups water (or broth) to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, until tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed, 10 to 15 minutes. (Or, pour 1½ cups boiling water or broth over 1 cup bulgur. Let stand, covered, until light and fluffy, about 30 minutes. If all the water is not absorbed, let the bulgur stand longer, or pour it through a fine-mesh sieve to remove excess liquid.) Makes 2½ to 3 cups.

Farro

Farro, also called emmer, is usually sold in the U.S. semi-pearled (sometimes labeled "semiperlato"), meaning some of the bran layer has been removed. If you find farro that is not semi-pearled, it will need to be soaked in water overnight before cooking and will need an additional 30 to 45 minutes of cooking time to become tender. Farro has a satisfying, chewy texture and nutty flavor. It can be used in soups and risottos and is particularly good in make-ahead salads because it holds its shape and doesn't become mushy. **TO COOK FARRO:** Bring 3 cups water (or broth) and 1 cup farro to a boil. Stir, reduce heat to a simmer and cook, uncovered, until tender, 15 to 25 minutes. Drain. Makes 3 cups.

Fonio

Fonio is an ancient grain with roots in West Africa. It's a type of millet and is suitable for a gluten-free diet. With a slightly nutty flavor and delicate texture, the grain can be made into porridge. Fonio is also great in salads or can be served alongside a stew or saucy dish to soak up all the flavors. **TO COOK FONIO:** Bring 2 cups water to a boil in a saucepan. Add 1 cup fonio and stir to mix. Reduce heat to low; cook, covered, until the liquid is absorbed, about 5 minutes. Fluff the grains with a fork. Makes about 4 cups.

Freekeh

Freekeh is a type of young wheat that's been eaten for centuries in the Middle East, especially in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. Also known as green wheat, it's harvested while it's still tender. The grain is then charred over a fire, weakening the husks and giving it a smoky, nutty flavor. Freekeh is either cracked, which reduces the cooking time, or left whole. Use this chewy grain in salads, soups and stews. **TO COOK FREEKEH:** Combine 2 cups water (or broth) and 1 cup cracked freekeh in a medium saucepan; bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat to maintain a simmer and cook until the liquid is absorbed, 12 to 15 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Drain any remaining liquid. Makes 2¼ cups.

Millet

If you're looking for a gluten-free grain alternative to quinoa, give nutty-tasting millet a try in salads, savory millet cakes and fillings for stuffed peppers. Millet is sold hulled: The outer husk has been removed, leaving the grain—tiny yellow balls—intact. Toasting millet in a large dry skillet over medium heat for 4 minutes before cooking helps it retain its shape. **TO COOK MILLET:** Bring 2½ cups water (or broth) to a boil; add 1 cup millet. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, until tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Makes 3 cups.

Oats

Oats are an endlessly versatile whole grain. There are three main types: steel-cut, rolled and instant. Steel-cut oats take the longest to cook and are the least processed. Rolled oats get flattened during processing, leading to a softer texture and shorter cook time. Instant oats are the quickest to make, thanks to their thinness. Any of these varieties work well, whether you're making overnight oats, oatmeal, pancakes or banana bread. Oats can also be processed to make oat milk, a tasty non-dairy alternative. **TO COOK ROLLED OATS:** Bring 2 cups water to a boil in a small saucepan. Add 1 cup oats and reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, for 2 to 3 minutes. Makes 2 cups.

Quinoa

Quinoa is a delicately flavored grain that was a staple in the ancient Incas' diet. It has a mild flavor and cooks quickly, so it's the ideal base for salads, pilafs, stir-fries and grain bowls. Rinsing removes any residue of saponin (quinoa's natural, bitter protective covering). Toasting the grain before cooking enhances its flavor. **TO COOK QUINOA:** Bring 2 cups water (or broth) to a boil; add 1 cup quinoa. Cover and simmer until all the liquid is absorbed, about 15 minutes. Use a fork to fluff and separate the grains. Makes 3 cups.

Sorghum

Sorghum is an ancient grain native to Africa. It is often used in cereals or milled into flour. It can be cooked like other whole grains, resulting in a nutty, toothsome texture that's perfect for salads and side dishes. You can also pop sorghum for a healthy snack similar to popcorn. **TO COOK SORGHUM:** Add 1 cup sorghum to a large saucepan with 3 cups water (or broth). Bring to a boil over high heat; cook for 5 minutes. Reduce heat to low; cover and cook for 1 hour, stirring halfway through. Remove from heat. Stir, cover and let stand until the liquid is absorbed, 15 to 20 minutes. Makes 3½ cups.

Spelt

Spelt is a cereal grain with a mild, nutty flavor and a relatively high protein content. Spelt flour is used in baking, and whole-grain spelt can be used just like farro and other sturdy whole grains in grain salads, bowls and pilafs. **TO COOK SPELT:** Bring 2 cups water (or broth) to a boil; add 1 cup spelt. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, until tender, about 1 hour. Makes 3 cups.

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Millet-Stuffed Peppers with Ginger & Tofu at eatingwell.com/milletpeppers

Teff

Teff is a small grain from Ethiopia and Eritrea, measuring about 1 millimeter. It comes in a variety of colors, including red, white and dark brown. The ancient grain is commonly ground into flour, which is then used to make injera, a pan-fried flatbread. It can also be used in baked goods or turned into a porridge. The gluten-free grain is mild in flavor, so it's a versatile ingredient. **TO COOK TEFF:** Bring 1 cup water (or broth) to a boil; add 1 cup teff and cover. Reduce heat and simmer until the teff absorbs all the liquid, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork. Makes about 3 cups.

Wheat Berries

Wheat berries have a wonderful, chewy texture that makes them perfect for salads and any recipe in which you want the grain to hold its shape—it's almost impossible to make mushy wheat berries. Wheat berries can be used in salads, soups, pilafs and even hot cereal. Wheat berries of any variety (hard, soft, spring or winter wheat) can be used interchangeably. Labeling is not consistent. You may find them labeled as "hard red winter wheat," without a mention of wheat berries. Some recipes instruct soaking overnight, but that is not necessary. **TO COOK WHEAT BERRIES:** Sort through the wheat berries carefully, discarding any stones, and rinse with water. Bring 4 cups water (or broth) and 1 cup wheat berries to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender but still a little chewy, about 1 hour. Drain. Makes 2¼ cups.

Wild Rice

Wild rice, a staple of Native Americans in Minnesota, is not rice at all but rather the only semi-aquatic grass native to North America. But it's a wonderful stand-in or mix-in for plain rice in all sorts of recipes. Its pleasing texture and appearance makes it a welcome addition to casseroles. There is cultivated wild rice and hand-harvested wild rice, and their cooking times are different. The instructions here are for cultivated, while "wild" wild rice only takes 15 to 20 minutes. **TO COOK WILD RICE:** Add 1 cup wild rice to a large saucepan of lightly salted boiling water (use at least 4 cups water) or broth; cook until tender, 45 to 55 minutes. Drain. Makes 2 to 2½ cups. (You can also find quick-cooking wild rice—a whole-grain rice that cooks in less than 30 minutes—or microwaveable wild rice that's done in 10 minutes or less. Follow the cooking instructions on the package.)

The Beauty of Variety

Vibrant produce offers unique benefits that are even better when you diversify what's on your plate.

BY EATINGWELL EDITORS AND JESSICA MIGALA
Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

THE MEDITERRANEAN diet is well known for its health benefits, and one of the most important components of this eating pattern is consuming a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Eating more fruits and vegetables can help reduce your risk for chronic diseases, including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity and certain types of cancer.

Produce is also packed with antioxidants and phytochemicals. What's fascinating is that nature seems to have a way of highlighting these beneficial nutrients by giving them bright colors that allow you to spot them easily.

To get the maximum disease-fighting power that phytochemicals can provide, choose foods representing all colors of the rainbow. This can be done via fresh, canned and frozen produce, depending on taste preferences, budget and availability. Here's how to incorporate all of the colors of the rainbow into your diet.

1. Red Fruits and Vegetables

Red plant foods such as tomatoes and watermelon contain lycopene, a phytochemical that may help protect against prostate and breast cancers. Lycopene not only has anticancer benefits but also helps reduce inflammation and the risk of diabetes, among other benefits, according to 2020 research in *Antioxidants*. Some delicious red fruits and veggies include apricots, blood oranges, cranberries, grapes, papaya, red peppers and tomatoes.

2. Orange Fruits and Vegetables

Alpha and beta carotene make foods such as carrots and sweet potatoes so brilliantly orange. The body converts these compounds into the active form of vitamin A, which helps keep your

eyes, bones and immune system healthy.

These phytochemicals also have antioxidant properties, which helps neutralize free radicals that can contribute to disease. Add the carotenes to your diet by eating the following foods: cantaloupe, carrots, oranges, pumpkin, sweet potatoes and winter squash.

3. Yellow Fruits and Vegetables and Leafy Greens

Many yellow and green vegetables are good sources of lutein and zeaxanthin, phytochemicals that accumulate in the eyes and help prevent age-related macular degeneration, a leading cause of blindness in older people, per research in the journal *Nutrients* in 2022. Leafy greens are also rich in beta carotene. To get the benefits of these eye-healthy nutrients, eat more of these fruits and veggies: artichoke, arugula, broccoli, cabbage, chard, corn, kale and summer squash.

4. Green Fruits and Vegetables

According to the National Cancer Institute, cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli and kale provide compounds called indoles and isothiocyanates, which may help prevent cancer. Specifically, the National Cancer Institute says these plant compounds may help protect cells from DNA damage, reduce inflammation and inhibit tumor formation. Fill up on these nutritious cruciferous vegetables: bok choy, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kohlrabi, mustard greens, turnips and watercress.

5. Blue, Purple and Deep Red Fruits and Vegetables

Blue, purple and deep red fruits and vegetables are full of anthocyanins and proanthocyanins, antioxidants that help keep your heart healthy and brain functioning optimally. According to a 2021 review in the journal *Pharmaceuticals,* consuming anthocyanin-rich foods reduces free radicals and inflammation to counteract oxidative stress (which contributes to chronic disease) and protects cells from damage. Try these antioxidant-rich foods: blackberries, blueberries, eggplant, plums, raspberries and strawberries.

Of course, you should eat your favorite healthy foods liberally, but it's important to vary your intake of fruits and vegetables and to aim to eat a rainbow of produce colors. Each color, as it's found in nature, provides a different nutrient or plant compound that has unique health benefits.

Not only does doing this add different flavors, but having a variety of colors on your plate makes each meal gorgeous, too. As they say: Taste the rainbow!

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SUPER SPICES

People around the world have known for centuries about the healing power of herbs and spices. Modern science explores why they're so good for you.

BY KERRI-ANN JENNINGS, M.S., RD
AND ANDREA MATHIS, M.A., RDN, LD

Reviewed by dietitian
Emily Lachtrupp, M.S., RD

A sprinkle of cinnamon in your morning coffee. A handful of freshly chopped basil over pasta. You know how herbs and spices can wake up just about any food, but they can also do a lot to keep you well. Here are the health benefits of some of our favorite herbs and spices, highlighting those that are often included in the Mediterranean diet.

Keep in mind that some herbs in large doses can cause side effects or interact with medications. Use in moderation, and tell your doctor about any herbal supplements you take.

1. Black Peppercorns

Piperine, a naturally occurring compound that gives peppercorns their kick, may reduce the risk of certain cancers, including those of the breast, lung, prostate, ovaries and digestive tract, according to a 2019 *Applied Sciences* review. There are several mechanisms at play, but one of the key benefits of piperine is that it can trigger apoptosis, a biochemical process that tells cells to self-destruct before they have the chance to grow out of control and form tumors.

2. Cardamom

Cardamom is an aromatic spice commonly used in Middle Eastern, Indian and Arabic cuisines, among others. It may provide numerous health benefits due to its high levels of antioxidants. A 2020 study in *Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy* found that cardamom helped decrease blood pressure in patients with hypertension. While other studies have looked at cardamom's effects on gastrointestinal discomfort, type 2 diabetes and blood glucose, and more, further research is needed before recommendations can be made, according to a 2022 review in *Nutrition Today*.

The compound of note in coriander is linalool, an antioxidant that may have anti-cancer properties and may protect the brain from cognitive decline.

3. Cayenne Pepper

Capsaicin is a plant chemical in cayenne pepper that gives the pepper its kick, and it may do good things for your heart. In a review of four observational studies, chile pepper eaters had a 25 percent reduced risk of dying from any cause compared to those who rarely or never ate them, per the *Annals of Medicine and Surgery* in 2021. (More research is needed to determine just how much or often to eat is ideal for these potential longevity benefits, according to the researchers.) Capsaicin activates certain receptors in the body that increase fat metabolism, which may help individuals maintain a healthy weight, decreasing one risk factor for heart disease. In addition, capsaicin may also aid in blood clotting, which supports heart health.

Of course, hot peppers may not be right in everyone's diet. For example, if you have acid reflux, spicy foods in general can trigger symptoms and are best avoided, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

4. Cinnamon

The American Heart Association recommends using sweet spices such as cinnamon to add flavor instead of using sugar and other sweeteners. Most Americans eat more than the recommended amount of added sugar, which can contribute to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other serious conditions, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some studies suggest cinnamon may help lower fasting blood glucose and measures of insulin resistance in people with type 2 diabetes and prediabetes, according to a meta-analysis of 16 studies in *Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice* in 2019. It's possible that cinnamon may improve insulin sensitivity, leading to the aforementioned benefits, researchers note.

What's more, adding cinnamon may provide another potential strategy to lower blood pressure (reducing salt intake is the primary dietary strategy). A 2020 *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition* meta-analysis reported that consuming 2 grams of ground cinnamon daily (about ¾ teaspoon) lowered blood pressure by an average of 7.2/2.8 mm Hg, similar to effects from low-dose meds. This spice doesn't work its magic overnight; the best results came from studies lasting at least three months. Experts aren't sure how cinnamon controls blood pressure, but they suspect that it may open blood vessels, improving blood flow to the heart so it doesn't have to work as hard.

5. Cloves

Cloves are valued as a sweet aromatic spice that provides warmth and flavor in various recipes. Used in traditional Chinese medicine for years, they have numerous potential health benefits. Cloves contain a compound called eugenol, which acts as a natural antioxidant. Eugenol has been linked to helping reduce the risk of inflammatory diseases such as arthritis by helping decrease oxidative stress and inflammatory responses in the body. Cloves are also a great source of beta carotene, which is what gives them their rich dark-brown color. In the body, beta carotene is converted into vitamin A—an important nutrient for keeping the eyes healthy.

6. Coriander

You'll find these dried seeds of the cilantro plant in sausages and curries, soups and stews. The compound of note in coriander is linalool, an antioxidant that may have anti-cancer properties and may protect the brain from diseases of cognitive degeneration, such as Alzheimer's disease, as well as mood disorders such as anxiety, according to a 2018 review in *Food Research International*. (Further

research needs to be done in humans, however.) Some research suggests that the coriander plant is a more potent antioxidant than vitamin C, the researchers say.

7. Garlic

With its potent bioactive compounds and other nutrients, garlic may be good for much more than warding off vampires. Treatments with garlic extracts, powders and supplements have been found to significantly lower high blood pressure. In one meta-analysis of 12 trials on more than 550 people with hypertension, noted in *Experimental and Therapeutic Medicine* in 2020, garlic supplements lowered systolic and diastolic blood pressure by about 8 and 5 points, respectively, which is similar to typical results from taking blood pressure medications.

And, although some experts say the evidence is iffy, several studies suggest garlic supplements may help prevent colds, per a 2020 Cochrane review.

8. Ginger

Ginger is well known for helping to ease a queasy stomach. Studies show it can help soothe morning sickness as well as nausea from surgery, chemotherapy and motion sickness, according to a 2018 review in *Food Science & Nutrition*.

If you get migraines, this spice may provide some all-natural relief, according to a meta-analysis in the *American Journal of Emergency Medicine* in 2021. Ginger contains specific pain-relieving chemicals called gingerols and shogaols that work in a similar way to over-the-counter medications such as ibuprofen. In addition, ginger's pain-relieving properties may also extend to providing menstrual and osteoarthritis pain relief, though more research is needed, notes a 2020 review in *Phytotherapy Research*.

9. Oregano

These tiny but mighty leaves boast many nutrients, including vitamins K and E, calcium, iron,

Turmeric and ginger can have pain-relieving effects on a variety of ailments.

manganese and fiber, according to the University of Rochester Medical Center. Oregano is an herb commonly used in dishes such as pizza and pasta. In addition to lending flavor to food, it has been used to treat medical conditions for thousands of years. Oregano is rich in antioxidants—specifically, carvacrol and thymol. Carvacrol is the most abundant compound in oregano and has been shown to help stop the growth of several different types of bacteria. Thymol is a natural antifungal component that helps support the immune system by enhancing the production of antibodies. Its potent antibacterial properties work to fight against both gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria.

What's more, the antioxidants in oregano have anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties, says a study published in *Plants* in 2018. All of that is good news for your heart—and more. Antioxidants prevent cell damage caused by free radicals, helping fend off heart disease, stroke and cancer.

10. Paprika

Paprika may be best known for adding a pop of color to dishes, but it also contains capsaicin—the same compound found in chile peppers—which also has been shown to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. Capsaicin is well known for its pain-relieving properties. It works by affecting the neurotransmitter that communicates pain signals to the brain, resulting in decreased inflammation and pain. Once the capsaicin is extracted from the pepper, it can be added to a range of products, such as creams and gels, for effective pain-relief treatment.

11. Peppermint

Having a bad day? Brew a pot of peppermint tea. Research suggests the minty aroma may help lift mood and sharpen fuzzy thinking, notes a 2019 study in the *American Journal of Plant Sciences.* Some studies suggest the scent may also soothe an upset stomach, including in patients undergoing

chemotherapy, according to a randomized controlled trial discussed in *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* in 2021. In one small 2020 study in *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine,* surgical patients who sniffed peppermint post-procedure reported much less nausea compared with a control group.

While more research is needed in those areas, multiple studies show peppermint oil can ease pain from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), per a 2019 meta-analysis in *BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies.* Experts think it works by relaxing muscles in the colon and reducing pain and inflammation.

12. Rosemary

A member of the mint family, rosemary is prized both for its flavor and its fragrance. Studies show its woodsy scent helps improve concentration and may boost mood. In one study of nurses scheduled for shift work, inhaling rosemary oil for five to 10 minutes at a time over a two-hour span was effective in boosting feelings of alertness while decreasing sleepiness, found a 2021 randomized controlled trial in *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice.*

13. Turmeric

Turmeric is a plant native to Southeast Asia that has a long history in Indian ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine, according to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. It contains a specific anti-inflammatory compound found in the rhizome: curcumin, which gives the spice its famous yellow hue. Turmeric shows promise in managing inflammatory conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome and arthritis, according to a scientific article in *Nutrition Today* in 2020.

One issue, however, is that curcumin is not very bioavailable, meaning the body is not able to use it well. For that reason, there are no conclusions about whether using the spice in your kitchen has measurable health benefits.

That said, it's still a worthy spice to add to your meals, on its own or as part of a curry powder, not only for flavor and color but as part of an overall anti-inflammatory diet. Though it's not very bioavailable on its own, turmeric paired with black pepper helps increase the body's ability to absorb and benefit from curcumin.

14. Za'atar

A Middle Eastern spice blend, za'atar contains oregano, thyme, sumac and sesame seeds. As such, one of the wonderful things about za'atar is that there are several spices working together synergistically to support your health. A 2022 review in the *Journal of Functional Foods* points out that the polyphenols (plant compounds) in za'atar might help improve the balance of gut bacteria by inhibiting pathogenic bacteria and promoting the growth of good-for-you bacteria. It may also decrease inflammation in such a way to support the health of your liver.

ALL ABOUT OILS

Olive oil is an important and delicious part of the Mediterranean diet lifestyle, but there are other oils that provide health benefits and tastiness of their own.

BY NOVELLA LUI, M.H.Sc., RD
Reviewed by dietitian
Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

Olive oil is often recognized as a healthy Mediterranean diet staple, and for good reason. Olive oil has numerous benefits, such as supporting heart health and reducing inflammation. But it's not the only oil worth using. There are many other healthy, delicious options that are staples in cuisines across the globe. Find out what makes an oil healthy, plus four dietitian-approved picks to add to your weekly rotation.

There are many cooking oils on grocery-store shelves nowadays, and it can be hard to know which to buy. A healthy oil is one that has a good balance of saturated and unsaturated fats. Olive oil, avocado oil, sesame oil, peanut oil and canola oil are examples. Saturated fat isn't bad in principle, but modern diets tend to include too much saturated and not enough unsaturated fat. While saturated fats are mainly found in animal products like meat and cheese, they also occur naturally in plant-based foods.

Incorporating more unsaturated fats—monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in particular—in your diet comes with

benefits. They've been shown to benefit heart health and gut health and decrease inflammation throughout the body. These healthy fats are often found in plant-based oils, including some of the ones on this list, as well as foods such as avocado, trout, salmon, nuts and seeds.

One thing to note is that not all cooking oils can be used in the same way. Some have a lower smoke point, which refers to the temperature at which oils begin burning, making them better for low-temperature cooking and for use in cold dishes, such as in a vinaigrette. Others have a high smoke point, making them better for high-heat applications, such as frying. Choose a cooking oil that offers versatility so it can be used in many ways. (For reference, a 1-tablespoon serving of olive oil provides 126 calories, 14 grams total fat, 2 grams saturated fat, 10 grams monounsaturated fat, and 1 gram polyunsaturated fat.) Here are four comparable cooking oils with a similar nutrition profile to olive oil that you can include in your kitchen.

Avocado Oil

Avocados are native to Central America, but their popularity has spread globally. Aside from Mexico and other Central American countries, you can find different avocado varieties grown in the U.S., New Zealand and more. Extracted from the avocado fruit, avocado oil has a high smoke point suitable for high-heat cooking such as searing and browning, but it also works well in salads and condiments. Unrefined avocado oil offers a rich and nutty flavor. While avocado oil has a lower amount of vitamin E (a type of monounsaturated fat) than olive oil does, it's still a good source of antioxidant nutrients, such as tyrosol and hydroxytyrosol, that may offer health-protective benefits, per a 2019 article in *Molecules*. Smaller research studies have been conducted to determine the effects of avocado oil on heart health, with promising results.

Sesame Oil

Sesame oil is commonly used in East Asian and South Indian cooking. The oil comes in two forms: neutral and toasted. Neutral sesame oil is made with raw seeds, perfect for high-heat cooking. Toasted sesame oil is made from seeds that are toasted before the oil is extracted, offering a rich aroma and flavor—the darker the oil, the stronger its flavor and aroma.

There is growing research into sesame seeds as a functional food offering potential anti-inflammatory and antioxidative effects, mainly due to three compounds—sesamin, sesamol and sesamolin. Specifically, according to a 2020 article in the *Saudi Pharmaceutical Journal,* sesamin has been noted to inhibit the formation of pro-inflammatory compounds, and sesamol may be linked to lowering LDL levels while retaining HDL levels, thus benefiting heart health, per a 2023 review in *Molecules.* The third compound, sesamolin, may help reduce the risk of certain types of cancer, according to a 2021 review in *Molecules.* However, more research is needed to confirm the specific health benefits of sesame seeds.

Sesame oil is also fantastic for medium-heat cooking methods, such as sautéing, stir-frying and baking. Light sesame oil is an excellent choice if you're looking for a neutral-flavor oil. The flavor and aroma of toasted sesame oil are amplified, bringing a perfect added touch to noodle dishes, sauces and dressings.

Peanut Oil

Peanut oil is known for its high vitamin E content, which protects the body's cells from damaging free radicals that could contribute to heart disease and certain types of cancer, per a 2021 article in *Agriculture.* This high-smoke-point cooking oil is commonly used in traditional cuisines of Southeast Asia, West Africa and the American South. According to 2020 research published in the journal *LWT–Food Science and Technology,* peanut oil also offers amounts of unsaturated fats comparable to olive oil, making it a heart-healthy choice. With the wide varieties of peanut oil available, your best bet is to go for the unrefined oil that has retained its natural flavor, aroma and nutrients. Peanut oil extracted from raw peanuts is well suited for medium-to-high-heat cooking with its high smoke point and neutral taste. Like toasted sesame oil, roasted peanut oil has a peanutty flavor and aroma.

Canola Oil

Canola oil has gotten a bad reputation over the years, due to its wide use in ultra-processed foods and the spread of false claims on social platforms. But the claims that canola oil is bad for you simply aren't backed up by science. Canola oil on its own is a versatile and budget-friendly cooking oil with a high smoke point that's perfect for many cooking applications.

Canola oil is also a staple in traditional Nordic diets of Denmark, Finland and Sweden that focus on rye, fish, vegetables and berries. Research including a 2019 review in *Nutrients* has shown that canola oil could offer anti-inflammatory properties and heart-health benefits similar to the benefits from olive oil. Canola can be used in recipes such as waffle batters, fruit desserts and aioli.

THE FIVE BEST FISH

Nutritious, delicious and sustainable—these fish have it all. Plus: Know what kinds to eat more sparingly.

BY BRIERLEY HORTON, M.S., RD
Reviewed by dietitian Elizabeth Ward, M.S., RDN

Fish, a staple of the Mediterranean diet, is a lean, healthy source of protein—and the oily kinds, such as salmon, tuna, sardines and mackerel, deliver those heart- and brain-healthy omega-3 fats. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020–2025 recommend that adults eat 8 ounces of seafood per week (based on a 2,000-calorie diet).

There's also concern about the environment and choosing seafood that's sustainable. So if you often stand at the fish counter a little perplexed and wondering what's good for you and the planet, we can help. Below are the healthiest fish to eat when it comes to sustainability, mercury content and nutritional benefits.

Befriend your local fishmonger—they will help you figure out the sourcing methods for your desired fish.

1. Salmon

Most farm-raised and wild-caught salmon (including canned) is relatively low in mercury and other contaminants. Even better, a 2023 *Science of the Total Environment* article concluded that wild-caught Alaska salmon produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions than farmed Norwegian salmon, making it better for the environment.

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Pan-Roasted Sesame Salmon at eatingwell.com/sesamesalmon

To give you an idea of how well managed Alaska's salmon fisheries are, consider this: Biologists are posted at river mouths to count how many wild fish return to spawn. If the numbers begin to dwindle, the fishery is closed before it reaches its limits, as happened recently with some Chinook fisheries. This close monitoring, along with strict quotas and careful management of water quality, means Alaska's wild-caught salmon are more sustainable than that of just about any other salmon fishery.

From a nutrition standpoint, farm-raised and wild-caught salmon have just about the same heart-healthy omega-3 fats, according to the USDA. Buying salmon in a can is a more affordable way to get this healthy seafood in your diet. Canned salmon is not just a great source of omega-3 fats; it is one of the best sources of nondairy calcium. A 3-ounce serving has 241 milligrams (most adults need between 1,000 and 1,200 mg per day). Canned wild salmon is typically sockeye or pink from Alaska, but you'll want to check the label to make sure.

2. Atlantic Mackerel

This species is a fast-growing fish, meaning it can repopulate easily and handle higher amounts of fishing. The gear used to catch types of Atlantic mackerel is efficient and not likely to cause major habitat destruction, another reason this is an ocean-friendly choice. This strong-flavored fish is high in heart-healthy omega-3s, a good source of protein—delivering about 20 grams in 3 ounces cooked—and pairs well with bold seasonings.

3. Herring

Herring is a Nordic diet staple. It has a higher omega-3 content than sardines, trout and mackerel at more than 1,400 mg per 3 ounces, and it's also an excellent source of vitamin D and selenium. You'll typically find herring that has been canned, cured or smoked on restaurant menus, but it can also be eaten fresh.

Seafood Watch recommends buying U.S. Atlantic herring caught with purse seines or California herring caught with set gill nets.

4. Wild-Caught Sardines

The tiny, inexpensive sardine (fresh or canned) is making it onto many healthy lists, and for good reason. It packs nearly 300 mg of omega-3 fats per 3 ounces and is one of the very few foods that's naturally high in vitamin D. It's also one of the few foods naturally high in calcium, with 25 percent of your daily needs per serving. Fish like herring, pilchard and sprat are in the same family as sardines. Quick to reproduce, Pacific sardines have rebounded from both overfishing and a natural collapse in the 1940s.

5. Rainbow Trout and Some Lake Trout

Rainbow trout (also referred to as steelhead trout) is one of the best fish to eat when it's farmed in

the U.S. or in indoor recirculating tanks, according to Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch. Trout ranks just below canned pink salmon when it comes to omega-3 fats, and it supplies potassium, selenium and vitamin B6 while offering more than a day's worth of vitamin B12.

Lake trout is a great alternative when it's sourced from the right places. Seafood Watch advises buying lake trout caught in the Great Lakes, specifically Lake Superior's Michigan and Minnesota waters, while avoiding trout that was caught in Wisconsin's Lake Superior waters.

5 Fish to Limit

These large fish carry pollutants that may cause serious health issues in humans.

BY JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD

The large fish listed below are popular ones that are both depleted and, in many cases, carry higher levels of mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

1. Bluefin Tuna
The World Wildlife Fund put the bluefin tuna on its list of endangered species, and Seafood Watch reports that populations are depleted and overfished. Bluefin has high levels of mercury and can be high in PCBs, so the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) recommends eating no more than one serving per month.

2. Orange Roughy
This fish lives a long life but is slow to reproduce, making it vulnerable to overfishing. According to the EDF, orange roughy have extremely long lives—up to 149 years in some cases—which also means this fish has high levels of mercury, causing the EDF to issue a health advisory.

3. Salmon Farmed in Pens
Most farmed salmon is raised in tightly packed, open-net pens that are often rife with parasites and diseases that threaten the wild salmon trying to swim by to ancestral spawning waters. Open-net-farmed salmon are often given antibiotics to combat diseases, and their food and waste pollute the ocean.

4. Mahi-Mahi
Imported, longline mahi-mahi, or dolphinfish, is rated as one of the least eco-friendly fish by the EDF. There is concern about bycatch, including sea turtles, seabirds and sharks, getting tangled in the gear when mahi-mahi is fished. However, mahi-mahi caught in the U.S. and Ecuador with troll lines is ranked as a good alternative.

5. Wild-Caught Atlantic Halibut
This fish grows and matures slowly, so it is susceptible to overfishing. Because of the depletion of Atlantic halibut populations, the U.S. prohibits commercial harvest of the breed, found in the North Atlantic Ocean. Seafood Watch rates it "Avoid."

BUDGET-FRIENDLY STAPLES

These 12 foods prove that eating nutritiously doesn't mean you need to break the bank.

BY JESSICA BALL, M.S., RD
Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

When it comes to eating healthy, flexibility is key to making new habits stick long term. Part of the reason the Mediterranean diet is so highly regarded is because it's flexible and easy to follow, unlike fad diets that often have rigid rules. The Mediterranean diet simply encourages you to eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, unsaturated fats and lean proteins (including plant-based protein sources). You get to choose exactly which foods to eat within those groups.

What's more, you don't need to break the bank to follow this eating pattern. There are ample nutritious, budget-friendly foods that can help you gain the healthy benefits of the Mediterranean diet in a way that works for your lifestyle.

1. Beans

Beans are a great source of fiber, vitamins and minerals like potassium, magnesium and iron—nutrients that many Americans aren't getting enough of, per the Department of Health and Human Resources. Plus, beans are rich in protein and fiber,

making them a super-satisfying plant-based addition to any meal. Canned beans are a cost-effective option, but if you have the time, dried are even less expensive and will last for years in your pantry.

2. Peanut Butter

Nuts pack an impressive punch of protein, fiber and healthy fat, a combination that helps satisfy your hunger and keeps you full for longer after a meal. The specific type of fat they contain—unsaturated—is favored in the Mediterranean diet and has been shown to help support heart health, lower inflammation and improve brain health.

Frozen berries are usually flash-frozen at peak ripeness to preserve their flavor and nutrition while allowing them to last for months in the freezer.

3. Lentils

There are many reasons to love lentils. For starters, they're super nutritious, with a ⅓-cup serving of cooked lentils boasting 6 grams of protein, 5 grams of fiber, and 13 percent and 30 percent of your daily iron and folate, respectively, per the USDA. Another positive feature of this plant-based protein source is its price, with most varieties clocking in at less than 10 cents per serving. Last, lentils cook much more quickly than other types of dried legumes—think 15 to 20 minutes, compared with over an hour for dried beans or chickpeas.

4. Potatoes

What's not to love about the humble spud? The Mediterranean diet emphasizes eating more vegetables, and while not the most colorful of veg, potatoes are a very nutritious and budget-friendly option. They're a great source of fiber (especially if you eat the skin) as well as potassium and vitamin C, two nutrients that support healthy immune function and heart health. Plus, they're a surprising source of protein, with a medium baked potato delivering 4 grams, per the USDA. And they're inexpensive, coming in at around $1.50 per pound.

5. Canned Fish

The Mediterranean diet encourages eating two servings of fish weekly, due to the omega-3 fatty acids they contain. Opting for canned fish is a great way to up your intake. This shelf-stable alternative is much less expensive than its fresh or frozen counterparts—for example, a 5-ounce can of salmon costs about $2, compared with at least $4 for the same amount of fresh salmon. Plus, canned fish like sardines, salmon, tuna and mackerel are all precooked and ready to enjoy, making them a quick and easy protein addition to your meals.

6. Canned Tomatoes

Canned tomatoes are picked at the peak of freshness, so their flavor and nutrients are preserved when canned. In fact, canned tomatoes deliver even greater levels of iron and the antioxidant lycopene than fresh tomatoes do. Plus, they cost a fraction of the price of fresh, especially if you buy them in bulk at a wholesale store like Costco. Add canned tomatoes to everything from curries to pastas and stews for flavorful and nutritious meals.

7. Onions and Garlic

Onions and garlic are regularly used in many cuisines across the globe, including those in the Mediterranean region. These staple cooking aromatics are actually great sources of nutrition. Both onions and garlic are sources of prebiotic fiber, a type of fiber that acts as food for the healthy bacteria in our gut microbiome. Research has found that garlic provides other health benefits, such as helping support healthy blood pressure, cholesterol and immune health. Onions help support healthy blood sugar levels and have anti-inflammatory properties that can benefit your heart health.

8. Rice

The Mediterranean diet encourages increasing your intake of whole grains to enjoy the health benefits they provide, like supporting heart health, healthy digestion and stable blood sugar levels. Nutritious whole grains include corn, barley, quinoa, oats, bulgur and teff, to name a few. But sometimes specialty grains can come at a higher price or may be less available where you shop. Luckily, rice is a great budget-friendly grain that is widely available. While any type of rice—including white—can have a place in a healthy eating pattern, brown rice is higher in fiber and protein than other types.

9. Frozen Berries

Another key component of the Mediterranean diet is varying your fruits and veggies as much as possible. Berries are delicious, colorful and packed with nutrients—they're a great source of fiber, vitamins, minerals and anti-inflammatory compounds. But fresh berries can go bad if not eaten soon after purchase. That's where frozen berries come in. Frozen berries are usually flash-frozen at peak ripeness to preserve their flavor and nutrition while allowing them to last for months in the freezer (compared with days in the fridge). Plus, they typically cost less than half what their fresh counterparts cost.

10. Oats

Oats are another example of a fiber-rich whole grain that can be more accessible to those on a budget. Plus, dried oats have a great shelf life, lasting up to two years if stored properly. A 30-ounce container of name-brand Quaker Oats retails at $5.50—that's less than 19 cents per ounce. Store-brand options can cost even less. Besides standard oatmeal or overnight oats, try making energy balls with ingredients like oats, nut butter and dried fruit for a convenient, energizing snack.

11. Frozen Greens

Leafy greens are one of the most nutrient-dense foods around, meaning they pack many vitamins, minerals and nutrients into a small serving. Since fresh greens are quite perishable, opting for frozen greens like kale and spinach can help you easily add a serving of vegetables to anything you make. While they may not be great for fresh recipes like salads, frozen greens are basically interchangeable with fresh in most recipes where the greens are cooked or stewed. (Just note that you may have to adjust the amount—as a general rule, 10 ounces of frozen spinach equates to about 1 pound of fresh.)

12. Corn

This vegetable is also considered a whole grain, and it's one of the top grain sources in many cuisines across the globe, such as Latin American. Corn is packed with fiber, vitamins and antioxidants that can help with everything from your gut health to your vision. If you enjoy it, it's definitely worth a spot on your plate, whether on the cob, as a side or in the form of a tortilla. And especially when it's in season in the summer, corn can be a budget-friendly vegetable to buy fresh and freeze to use later.

Standout Recipes

Quick breakfasts, fresh lunches and one-pot dinners make the New Mediterranean Diet easy and delicious to stick to.

DELICIOUS MORNINGS

These quick breakfasts include Mediterranean diet favorites such as whole grains, healthy fruits and veggie-packed egg dishes.

Pecan-Cherry Toasted Muesli Yogurt Cups

ACTIVE: 10 MIN **TOTAL:** 35 MIN

Full of healthy whole grains, nuts, seeds and dried fruit, granola seems healthy. But if it's coated with oil and sweeteners, it may be high in calories and added sugar. Muesli has the hearty goodness of granola but without those other extras. Keep some on hand to pair with yogurt, or make these cute parfaits for a morning buffet.

- 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- ½ cup slivered almonds
- ½ cup pecans, coarsely chopped
- ½ cup unsweetened large coconut flakes
- ¼ cup wheat germ or wheat bran
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup unsweetened dried tart cherries
- 4 cups low-fat vanilla yogurt

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Combine oats, almonds, pecans, coconut, wheat germ (or bran) and cinnamon in a large bowl. Mix well. Spread in an even layer on a rimmed baking sheet.
3. Bake, stirring halfway through, until the edges are toasty and golden, about 15 minutes. Sprinkle the muesli with salt and transfer the pan to a wire rack. Let cool completely, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and stir in dried cherries.
4. Place ¼ cup muesli in each of 8 small bowls or ramekins. Top each with ½ cup yogurt, then sprinkle each with 2 tablespoons of the remaining muesli.

SERVINGS 8 **SERVING SIZE** ¾ CUP
CALORIES 286 **CARBOHYDRATES** 35G
DIETARY FIBER 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 21G
PROTEIN 11G **TOTAL FAT** 13G **SATURATED FAT** 4G **CHOLESTEROL** 6MG **VITAMIN A** 91U
SODIUM 111MG **POTASSIUM** 420MG

Breakfast Naan Pizza

ACTIVE: 10 MIN **TOTAL:** 10 MIN

Give your morning eggs a tasty spin by building an easy individual pizza on a prepared naan.

- 1 whole-wheat naan
- 2 tablespoons part-skim ricotta cheese
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium marinara or pesto
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
- Chopped fresh basil and ground pepper for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Coat a rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.

2. Place naan on the prepared pan. Mix ricotta, marinara (or pesto) and lemon zest in a small bowl. Spread the mixture onto the naan, creating a well in the center. Carefully crack egg into the well. Sprinkle with Parmesan.

3. Bake until the naan is golden, the egg white is set and the cheese is melted, 8 to 10 minutes. Garnish with basil and pepper, if desired.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1 PIZZA **CALORIES** 458 **CARBOHYDRATES** 52G **DIETARY FIBER** 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 5G **PROTEIN** 24G **TOTAL FAT** 17G **SATURATED FAT** 7G **CHOLESTEROL** 202MG **VITAMIN A** 4211U **SODIUM** 758MG **POTASSIUM** 305MG

Ricotta-Berry Crepe

ACTIVE: 10 MIN **TOTAL:** 10 MIN

Make a big batch of these easy three-ingredient crepes to stash in your freezer so you always have a healthy breakfast on hand. A dollop of ricotta adds protein, while the berries offer a burst of sweetness and a little fiber.

- 1 whole-wheat crepe
- 2 tablespoons low-fat ricotta cheese
- ¼ cup berries
- 1 tablespoon honey (optional)

1. Spread crepe with ricotta. Top with berries. Fold up, wrap in foil and freeze for up to 1 month.
2. To heat and eat: Unwrap and microwave in 1-minute intervals until warmed through. Drizzle with honey, if desired.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CREPE **CALORIES** 187 **CARBOHYDRATES** 22G **DIETARY FIBER** 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G **PROTEIN** 10G **TOTAL FAT** 7G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 104MG **VITAMIN A** 2941U **VITAMIN C** 5MG **FOLATE** 47MCG **SODIUM** 172MG **CALCIUM** 130MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 12MG **POTASSIUM** 152MG

Strawberry & Yogurt Parfait

ACTIVE: 10 MIN **TOTAL:** 10 MIN

This recipe combines fresh fruit, strained yogurt and crunchy granola for an easy breakfast. Pack the parfait in a mason jar for a healthy breakfast on the go.

- 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ cup nonfat plain strained yogurt
- ¼ cup granola

1. Combine strawberries and sugar in a small bowl and let stand until the berries start to release juice, about 5 minutes.
2. Layer yogurt and the strawberries with their juice in a 2-cup container. Top with granola.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT 1½ CUPS **CALORIES** 285 **CARBOHYDRATES** 37G **DIETARY FIBER** 6G **TOTAL SUGARS** 22G **ADDED SUGARS** 7G **PROTEIN** 17G **TOTAL FAT** 8G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **CHOLESTEROL** 6MG **VITAMIN A** 301U **VITAMIN C** 98MG **FOLATE** 73MCG **SODIUM** 50MG **CALCIUM** 174MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 87MG **POTASSIUM** 577MG

Quick-Cooking Oats

ACTIVE: 5 MIN **TOTAL:** 5 MIN

Sometimes basic is best! At breakfast, that can certainly be the case. This easy oatmeal recipe teaches you the basic methods, so you get creamy, tender oats every time.

- 1 cup water or low-fat milk
- Pinch of salt
- ½ cup quick-cooking oats
- 1 ounce low-fat milk for serving
- 1 to 2 teaspoons honey, cane sugar or brown sugar for serving
- Pinch of cinnamon
- Berries and chopped nuts

1. Stovetop: Combine water (or milk) and salt in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil. Stir in oats and reduce heat to medium; cook for 1 minute. Remove from heat, cover and let stand for 2 to 3 minutes. Microwave: Combine water (or milk), salt and oats in a 2-cup microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high for 1½ to 2 minutes. Stir before serving.
2. Stir in milk, sweetener and cinnamon and top with fruit and nuts.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP **CALORIES** 150 **CARBOHYDRATES** 27G **DIETARY FIBER** 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 1G **PROTEIN** 5G **TOTAL FAT** 3G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **FOLATE** 20MCG **SODIUM** 152MG **CALCIUM** 27MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 42MG **POTASSIUM** 152MG

Feta, Egg & Olive Pita

ACTIVE: 10 MIN **TOTAL:** 10 MIN

Thes flavorful fixings come together in a whole-grain pita to give you a quick protein- and fiber-packed breakfast that's easy to take on the go.

- 2 tablespoons whole-milk plain strained yogurt
- ½ whole-wheat pita
- ¼ cup baby arugula
- 2 tablespoons halved cherry tomatoes
- 1 large egg, poached
- 3 pitted Kalamata olives, chopped
- 1 tablespoon crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ teaspoon za'atar

Spread yogurt inside pita. Fill pita with arugula, tomatoes, poached egg, olives and feta. Sprinkle with za'atar.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SANDWICH **CALORIES** 287 **CARBOHYDRATES** 27G **DIETARY FIBER** 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G **PROTEIN** 16G **TOTAL FAT** 13G **SATURATED FAT** 4G **CHOLESTEROL** 197MG **VITAMIN A** 7191U **SODIUM** 610MG **POTASSIUM** 229MG

Salsa Egg Skillet

ACTIVE: 10 MIN **TOTAL:** 10 MIN

Poach your egg right in some flavorful tomatillo salsa to put a little kick in your breakfast.

- ¼ cup tomatillo salsa
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon crumbled cotija cheese
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- Thinly sliced avocado, red onion and/or radishes for serving

1. Bring salsa and water to a simmer in a small skillet over medium heat. Make a small well in the middle and crack the egg into the well. Cook, covered, until the egg is set, 3 to 5 minutes. **2.** Remove from heat and top with cheese and cilantro. Serve with avocado, onion and/or radishes, if desired.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1 EGG & ¼ CUP SAUCE **CALORIES** 119 **CARBOHYDRATES** 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G **PROTEIN** 8G **TOTAL FAT** 7G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 194MG **VITAMIN A** 802IU **SODIUM** 437MG **POTASSIUM** 84MG

EASY LUNCHES

Make lunchtime a breeze with these delicious sandwiches, hearty grain bowls and colorful bento boxes.

Herb & Garlic Chicken Wraps

ACTIVE: 20 MIN **TOTAL:** 20 MIN

Cornichons and their pickling liquid combine with yogurt to make a tangy spread for these wraps. No cornichons? Use olives, pickled onions or dill pickles instead.

- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound chicken cutlets
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 small clove garlic, grated
- ¼ cup nonfat plain strained yogurt
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped cornichons, plus 1 teaspoon cornichon brine
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs, such as parsley, basil and/or dill
- 4 (10 inch) whole-wheat wraps
- 1 cup pea shoots or alfalfa sprouts
- ½ medium cucumber, julienned
- 2 cups mixed greens

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook, flipping once, until browned and cooked through, 4 to 6 minutes total. Reduce heat to medium and add lemon juice and garlic. Cook, turning the chicken and scraping up the brown bits on the bottom of the pan, until the liquid reduces and coats the chicken, about 1 minute. Let cool, then slice into strips.

2. Meanwhile, combine yogurt, cornichons and their brine and herbs in a small bowl. Place wraps on a work surface and spread the yogurt mixture over the wraps. Top with the chicken, pea shoots (or sprouts), cucumber and greens. Roll up like a burrito.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 WRAP
CALORIES 417 **CARBOHYDRATES** 46G
DIETARY FIBER 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 1G
PROTEIN 36G **TOTAL FAT** 11G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 84MG **VITAMIN A** 1929IU **VITAMIN C** 14MG **VITAMIN D** 1IU
VITAMIN E 1MG **FOLATE** 62MCG **VITAMIN K** 73MCG **SODIUM** 789MG **CALCIUM** 54MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 68MG **POTASSIUM** 568MG **ZINC** 1MG

Cucumber Caprese Sandwich

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 15 MIN

We added cucumber and greens to the tomato to make this refreshing cucumber caprese sandwich flavored with pesto, fresh mozzarella and a sweet balsamic glaze.

- **1 tablespoon pesto**
- **1 tablespoon mayonnaise**
- **2 slices whole-wheat sandwich bread, toasted**
- **1 small tomato, sliced (3½ ounces)**
- **1 ounce sliced fresh mozzarella cheese**
- **⅓ cup sliced cucumber (2 ounces)**
- **½ cup baby kale or arugula**
- **1 tablespoon balsamic glaze**
- **Freshly ground pepper to taste**

1. Stir pesto and mayonnaise together in a small bowl. Spread the mixture on one side of each slice of toast.

2. Layer tomato, mozzarella, cucumber and kale (or arugula) on top of one slice. Drizzle with balsamic glaze and sprinkle with pepper. Top with the second slice, spread-side down. Cut the sandwich in half.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SANDWICH **CALORIES** 437 **CARBOHYDRATES** 34G **DIETARY FIBER** 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 9G **ADDED SUGARS** 3G **PROTEIN** 13G **TOTAL FAT** 27G **SATURATED FAT** 8G **CHOLESTEROL** 26MG **VITAMIN A** 1663 U **VITAMIN C** 17MG **VITAMIN E** 4MG **FOLATE** 44MCG **VITAMIN K** 91MCG **SODIUM** 589MG **CALCIUM** 182MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 64MG **POTASSIUM** 512MG **ZINC** 1MG **OMEGA-3** 1G

Vegetarian Protein Bowls

ACTIVE: 30 MIN **TOTAL:** 1 HR

This is a complete meal in one bowl. Beans not only boost protein but also add creaminess to the farro mixture. Chimichurri sauce brightens the dish.

- 8 cups water
- 1¼ cups farro
- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added cannellini beans, rinsed
- 4 cups cauliflower florets
- 1 (1 pound) sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil plus ¼ cup, divided
- 2 teaspoons lemon-pepper seasoning, divided
- ¾ teaspoon salt, divided
- 1 (6 ounce) bunch fresh broccolini, cut into 2-inch pieces
- ½ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar
- 1 large clove garlic, grated
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ¼ cup chopped Castelvetrano olives

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Bring water to a boil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat; stir in farro. Return to a boil; reduce heat to medium and cook at a low boil, undisturbed, until the grains have expanded but are still al dente, about 30 minutes, stirring in cannellini beans during the last 5 minutes of cooking. Remove from heat and drain. Cover.

2. Meanwhile, place cauliflower florets and sweet potato on the prepared baking sheet. Drizzle with 1½ tablespoons oil and sprinkle with 1½ teaspoons lemon-pepper and ¼ teaspoon salt; toss well to coat and spread evenly on the pan. Combine broccolini, ½ tablespoon oil and the remaining ½ teaspoon lemon-pepper in a medium bowl and toss to coat; set aside. Roast the sweet potato and cauliflower until almost tender, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and push the sweet potatoes and cauliflower to one side. Add the broccolini to other side of the pan; roast until the vegetables are tender and lightly charred, about 10 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, stir parsley, cilantro, vinegar, garlic, crushed red pepper, olives and the remaining ¼ cup oil and ½ teaspoon salt together in a small bowl to make chimichurri. Stir ¼ cup of the chimichurri into the farro mixture.

4. Divide the farro mixture among 4 bowls and top evenly with roasted vegetables; drizzle with the remaining ¼ cup chimichurri.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP FARRO MIXTURE, 1¼ CUPS VEGETABLES & 1 TBSP. CHIMICHURRI **CALORIES** 572 **CARBOHYDRATES** 78G **DIETARY FIBER** 13G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G **PROTEIN** 17G **TOTAL FAT** 24G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **VITAMIN A** 13126IU **VITAMIN C** 103MG **VITAMIN E** 3MG **FOLATE** 82MCG **VITAMIN K** 144MCG **SODIUM** 752MG **CALCIUM** 171MG **IRON** 4MG **MAGNESIUM** 86MG **POTASSIUM** 993MG **ZINC** 2MG

Cucumber Salad, Hummus & Pita Bento Box Lunch

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 15 MIN

Enjoy this refreshing box on your lunch break. It combines cucumber salad, hummus, pita and more for a satisfying workday meal.

- ¼ cup chickpeas, rinsed
- ¼ cup diced cucumber
- ¼ cup diced tomato
- 1 tablespoon diced olives
- 1 tablespoon crumbled feta cheese
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- ½ teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon red-wine vinegar
- 3 ounces grilled turkey breast tenderloin or chicken breast
- 1 cup grapes
- 1 whole-wheat pita bread, quartered
- 2 tablespoons hummus

1. Toss chickpeas, cucumber, tomato, olives, feta, parsley, oil and vinegar together in a medium bowl. If you don't have an actual bento box, pack in a medium-size container.

2. Place turkey (or chicken) in another medium container.

3. Pack grapes and pita in small containers and hummus in a dip-size container.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1 BENTO BOX **CALORIES** 497 **CARBOHYDRATES** 61G **DIETARY FIBER** 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 26G **PROTEIN** 37G **TOTAL FAT** 14G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 76MG **VITAMIN A** 8891U **VITAMIN C** 17MG **FOLATE** 80MCG **SODIUM** 697MG **CALCIUM** 116MG **IRON** 4MG **MAGNESIUM** 101MG **POTASSIUM** 838MG

Salmon Rice Bowls

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 25 MIN

Inspired by the viral TikTok trend, this salmon rice bowl makes for a tasty lunch. With healthy ingredients like instant brown rice, salmon and veggies, you'll have a flavorful meal in just 25 minutes.

- 4 ounces salmon, preferably wild
- 1 teaspoon avocado oil
- ⅛ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup instant brown rice
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1½ teaspoons Sriracha
- 1½ teaspoons 50%-less-sodium tamari
- 1 teaspoon mirin
- ½ teaspoon freshly grated ginger
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ ripe avocado, chopped
- ½ cup chopped cucumber
- ¼ cup spicy kimchi
- 12 (4 inch) sheets nori (roasted seaweed)

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a small rimmed baking sheet with foil. Place salmon on the prepared pan. Drizzle with oil; season with salt. Bake until the salmon flakes easily with a fork, 8 to 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, combine rice and water in a small saucepan; cook according to package directions. Mix mayonnaise and Sriracha in a small bowl; set aside. Whisk tamari, mirin, ginger, crushed red pepper and salt in another small bowl; set aside.
3. Divide the rice between 2 bowls. Top with salmon, avocado, cucumber and kimchi. Drizzle with the tamari mixture and the mayonnaise mixture. Mix the bowls, if desired, and serve with nori.

SERVINGS 2 **SERVING SIZE** 1 BOWL
CALORIES 481 **CARBOHYDRATES** 47G
DIETARY FIBER 6G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G
ADDED SUGARS 1G **PROTEIN** 18G **TOTAL FAT** 25G **SATURATED FAT** 4G **CHOLESTEROL** 37MG **VITAMIN A** 1177IU **VITAMIN C** 14MG **VITAMIN** E 2MG **FOLATE** 94MCG **VITAMIN K** 45MCG **SODIUM** 687MG **CALCIUM** 41MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 101MG **POTASSIUM** 747MG **ZINC** 2MG **VITAMIN B12** 2MCG **OMEGA-3** 2G

Stories and Perspectives

Chefs with expertise in cuisines from around the world share favorite recipes that showcase the principles of the Mediterranean diet in delicious ways.

Dawn Burrell's Charred Cabbage Wedges with Cashew Cream

ACTIVE: 1 HR **TOTAL:** 1 HR 30 MIN

Cabbage was central to my childhood. The humble vegetable tantalized each one of my senses whenever it hit my family's dining table. It's a cultural staple in many African American households, and cabbage's versatility and heartiness made it a go-to for my mother's weekly culinary creations. Different renditions were always in rotation for me and my four siblings, whether enhanced with bacon or sautéed and served alongside my mother's signature smothered potatoes with onions. The combinations were endless, and its chameleon-like quality led to cabbage becoming my favorite vegetable growing up.

Memories like these have fueled my relationship with food. From eating as an Olympic long jumper to establishing my identity as a chef, the ingredients and cooking methods from my culture serve as a guiding light for what ends up on the plate. The subsequent dishes have not only provided me with comfort but also made me feel nourished and whole.

When I was asked to craft a recipe that reimagines the Mediterranean diet through the lens of my own culture, I turned back to cabbage. Society's reverence for the Mediterranean diet isn't unfounded. Plainly put, it centers fresh, whole foods: fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, legumes, healthy fats, herbs and spices. But the same tenets were applied when my ancestors crafted their own recipes and cooking techniques that have been passed down through generations.

Using this understanding as my guide, I created a recipe that channeled the Mediterranean diet's celebrated ingredients while utilizing the flavors and preparation methods found across the African diaspora. This recipe is a textbook example of what's become my signature cooking style: global comfort. It's a term I've coined that perfectly encapsulates my desire to pay homage to the feeling that comfort food from around the globe evokes.

Culturally driven recipes deserve to be highlighted, especially when you consider the nutritional value of the food. These recipes reflect historical influences, migration patterns, trade routes and the available resources. They convey narratives of resilience, adaptation and creativity in the face of challenges. By cooking and sharing recipes like these, we engage in a form of storytelling that connects us to the past, present and future.

Cashew Cream

- ½ cup raw cashews
- 2½ cups water, plus more for soaking
- ½ cup thinly sliced leek (white and light green parts only)
- ½ medium shallot, sliced
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic
- ¼ green Thai chile or 1–2 slices jalapeño pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Cabbage

- 10 cups unsalted vegetable broth
- 1 medium onion, quartered
- 1 head garlic, sliced in half crosswise
- 1 (1 inch) piece fresh ginger, sliced
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 10 whole peppercorns
- 1 medium cabbage (about 3 pounds), cut through the core into sixths
- 6 tablespoons avocado oil or other neutral oil, such as grapeseed, divided

Cashew Relish

- 1 cup raw cashews
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Pinch of salt plus ¼ teaspoon, divided
- ¼ cup avocado oil or other neutral oil, such as grapeseed
- 1 medium shallot, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon sorghum syrup or pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 scallion, thinly sliced

Pinch of crushed red pepper
½ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro, tender stems and leaves
12 fresh lemon basil or Thai basil leaves, finely chopped

To prepare cashew cream:
Soak ½ cup cashews in a bowl of warm water for 1 hour; drain.

Meanwhile, prepare cabbage:
1. Combine broth, onion, garlic head halves, ginger, 2 teaspoons salt and peppercorns in a large pot. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Place a wire rack on a baking sheet. Line another baking sheet with a clean kitchen towel or layers of paper towels.
2. Add cabbage wedges to the simmering broth. Cook until tender-crisp, about 15 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the cabbage wedges to the prepared rack. Let drain for 10 minutes, then transfer to the towel-lined baking sheet and set aside.
3. Combine leek, sliced ½ shallot, olive oil, 1 clove garlic and chile (or jalapeño) in a medium saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to soften, about 6 minutes. Add 2½ cups water and the drained cashews. Simmer for 15 minutes. Add ¼ teaspoon salt. Remove from heat and let cool for 15 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a high-speed blender. Puree until completely smooth, about 3 minutes. Set aside.

To prepare relish:
1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Combine 1 cup cashews, olive oil and a pinch of salt in a medium bowl. Spread the cashews on a baking sheet; bake until golden brown, 7 to 9 minutes. Transfer to a clean cutting board to cool, then roughly chop.
2. Heat ¼ cup avocado oil (or other neutral oil) in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add shallot and garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, 2 to 4 minutes. Add sorghum (or maple) syrup and vinegar; cook until sizzling subsides, about 30 seconds. Add scallion, crushed red pepper and the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt; cook, stirring, for 30 seconds more. Remove from heat. Let cool for about 5 minutes, then add the chopped cashews.
3. Heat a large skillet or griddle over medium-high heat. Add 2 tablespoons avocado oil (or other neutral oil). Add 2 cabbage wedges; cook until nicely charred, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate. Repeat with the remaining cabbage wedges and oil.
4. Stir cilantro and basil into the relish.
5. Spoon 1½ cups cashew cream onto a serving platter (reserve the rest for another use). Top with the cabbage wedges and the relish.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CABBAGE WEDGE, ¼ CUP CASHEW CREAM & SCANT 3 TBSP. RELISH
CALORIES 411 **CARBOHYDRATES** 26G **DIETARY FIBER** 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 10G **ADDED SUGARS** 3G **PROTEIN** 9G **TOTAL FAT** 31G **SATURATED FAT** 4G **VITAMIN A** 507IU **VITAMIN C** 59MG **VITAMIN E** 1MG **FOLATE** 76MCG **VITAMIN K** 132MCG **SODIUM** 727MG **CALCIUM** 106MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 29MG **POTASSIUM** 361MG

Padma Lakshmi's Tandoori Chicken Salad

ACTIVE: 40 MIN **TOTAL:** 40 MIN

I lived in a few Mediterranean countries for most of my 20s, so I'm quite familiar with the principles of the Mediterranean diet. I've always eaten according to its tenets. But I'd often miss the more vibrant flavors of my Indian childhood. That's where a recipe like this comes in. This tandoori chicken salad has the flavors I grew up with, and it's also quite healthy. Instead of chicken with rice or naan, I pile it on top of a big salad that's full of crunchy vegetables. Not all of us have access to a tandoor oven, obviously, but you can still enjoy the flavors of this North Indian specialty by marinating chicken in yogurt and using spices like garam masala for warmth and garlic, ginger and jalapeño for heat. With an array of colorful vegetables and herbs, it's a great summer dish that honors the tenets of the Mediterranean diet while giving it a South Asian spin.

Chicken

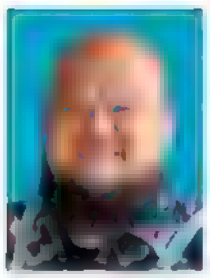
- 1 cup nonfat plain yogurt
- 2 teaspoons garam masala
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 jalapeño pepper, stemmed, seeded and finely minced (optional)
- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, gently flattened and cut into ½-inch strips
- 1 tablespoon canola oil

Salad

- 3 cups shredded iceberg lettuce
- 3 cups shredded red cabbage
- 3 cups diced plum tomatoes
- 2 cups sliced cucumber
- 1½ cups diced jicama
- 1 cup sliced radishes
- 1 small bunch scallions, finely chopped
- 1 cup loosely packed cilantro leaves, finely chopped
- Juice of 2 small lemons, or to taste

1. Whisk yogurt, garam masala, ginger, garlic, turmeric, salt and jalapeño (if using) in a shallow dish. Add chicken and stir to coat. Cover and refrigerate while preparing the vegetables.
2. Combine lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, cucumber, jicama, radishes, scallions and cilantro in a large bowl; toss to combine.
3. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and marinade; cook, stirring occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part registers 165°F, 6 to 8 minutes.
4. Transfer the chicken and the pan juices to the bowl with the salad. Add lemon juice to taste; toss to combine.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** 2⅓ CUPS
CALORIES 245 **CARBOHYDRATES** 16G
DIETARY FIBER 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 8G
PROTEIN 32G **TOTAL FAT** 6G
SATURATED FAT 1G **CHOLESTEROL** 85MG
VITAMIN A 1732IU **VITAMIN C** 52MG
VITAMIN D 1IU **VITAMIN E** 2MG **FOLATE** 68MCG **VITAMIN K** 76MCG **SODIUM** 483MG
CALCIUM 107MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 70MG **POTASSIUM** 1006MG **ZINC** 2MG
VITAMIN B12 1MCG



Yia Vang's Spicy Eggplant Dip with Lime & Cilantro

ACTIVE: 25 MIN **TOTAL:** 25 MIN

As a Hmong kid growing up in the Midwest, all I wanted when I came home from school was a simple peanut butter and jelly sandwich like all my friends had. Instead, bowls filled with sauces and dips covered our kitchen table. As a 9-year-old, I would look at these bowls in disgust, thinking, "C'mon, Mom! Why can't I just be like the other kids?"

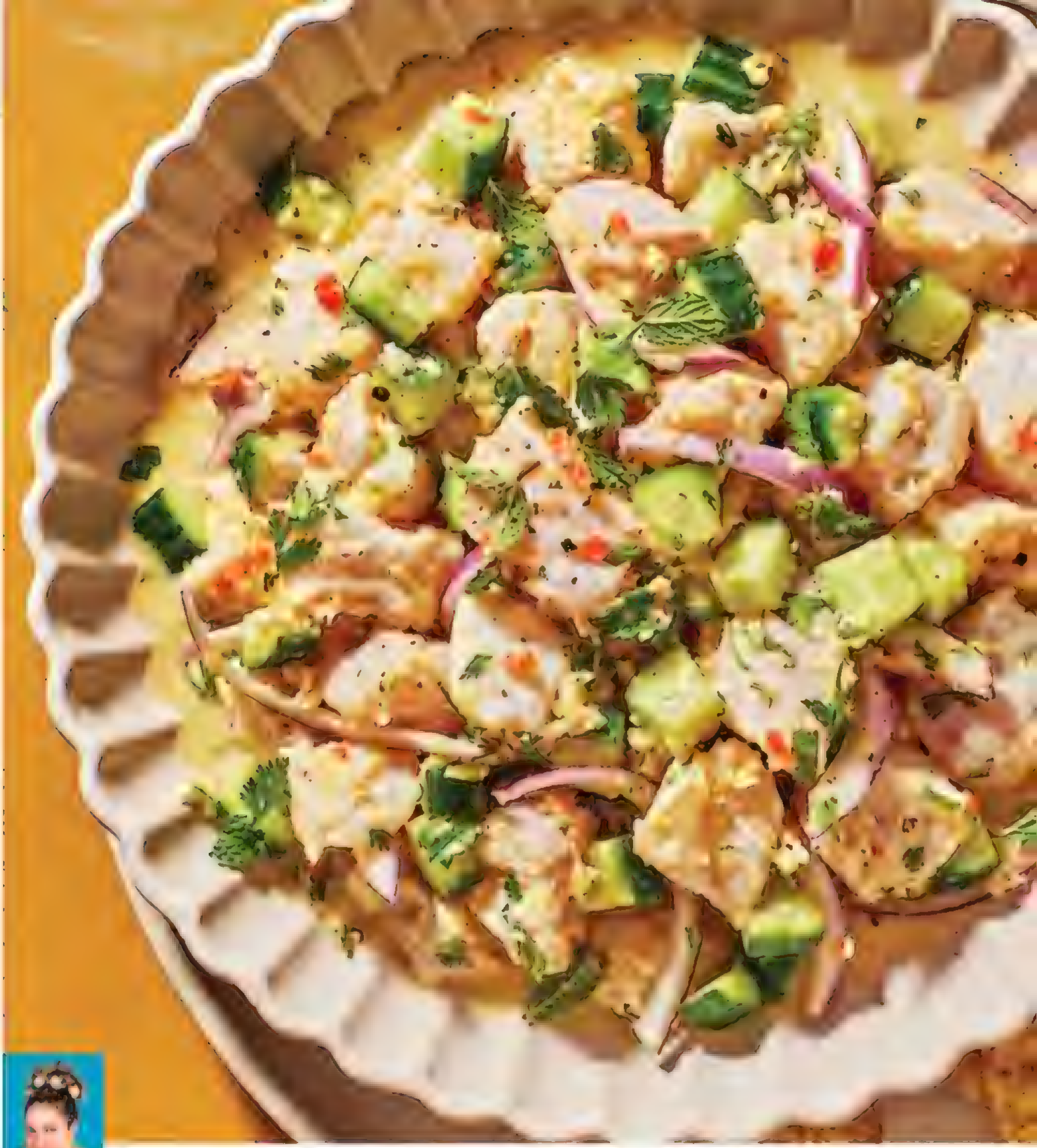
Fast-forward almost 30 years, and I crave one of those dips—the roasted eggplant dip that Mom always made. While similar to a baba ganoush, Mom's roasted eggplant dip has a few key elements that are different. And I think it's better than any other baba ganoush-style dish out there. Here's why: First, she used Japanese or Thai eggplant that she grew in her garden, which I find to be less bitter than larger globe eggplant. Plus, she roasted the eggplant over a fire, which infused it with a smokiness that balanced the bright cilantro and acidic lime juice. The final key is the heat from the Thai chiles—that little amount of heat will help open up your taste buds so you can truly enjoy all the flavors permeating through the dish. Bird's eye chiles are different from other chiles because the heat hits you later, after all the other flavors have had a chance to dance on your tongue.

I believe that food is a universal language we can all use, a common thread we have as humans to connect with each other. Mom knew nothing about Mediterranean cooking, but when she made this roasted eggplant dish for us, she was unknowingly flirting with baba ganoush. It was the snack that was always around when we needed a little something to hold us over until dinner. I remember going to a Mediterranean restaurant in college and ordering baba ganoush, having no idea what it was from the menu description. When I took a bite, all I could think about was Mom's dip. It brought me back to my childhood kitchen table.

- **1½ pounds Japanese eggplant, halved**
- **3 tablespoons canola oil, divided**
- **2 tablespoons chopped shallot**
- **2 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped**
- **2 Thai chiles, coarsely chopped**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **1 cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus more for garnish**
- **Juice of 1 lime**
- **2 teaspoons fish sauce**
- **2 teaspoons oyster sauce**
- **Crushed roasted peanuts for garnish (optional)**

1. Preheat grill to medium-high.
2. Brush cut sides of eggplant with 1 tablespoon oil. Grill the eggplant, cut side down, until charred, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip and grill until softened, 3 to 4 minutes more. Transfer to a cutting board. When cool enough to handle, scoop the flesh out of the skins (discard the skins).
3. Combine shallot, garlic, chiles to taste and salt in a mortar. Mash with a pestle into a coarse paste. Add cilantro and mash to combine. Add the eggplant flesh and mash to combine. Mix in lime juice, fish sauce, oyster sauce and the remaining 2 tablespoons oil. (Alternatively, place shallot, garlic and chiles to taste on a clean cutting board. Using the tines of a fork or the side of a chef's knife, mash into a coarse paste. Add cilantro and mash until bruised. Place the eggplant flesh in a medium bowl and coarsely mash. Add the cilantro mixture and mix well. Add lime juice, fish sauce, oyster sauce and the remaining 2 tablespoons oil; mix until well combined.) Garnish with peanuts and more cilantro, if desired.

SERVINGS 8 **SERVING SIZE** ¼ CUP
CALORIES 75 **CARBOHYDRATES** 6G
DIETARY FIBER 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G
PROTEIN 1G **TOTAL FAT** 5G **VITAMIN A** 157IU
VITAMIN C 4MG **VITAMIN E** 1MG **FOLATE** 22MCG **VITAMIN K** 13MCG **SODIUM** 222MG
CALCIUM 13MG **MAGNESIUM** 16MG



María Lara Bregatta's Tangerine Ceviche

ACTIVE: 25 MIN
TOTAL: 2 HR 25 MIN

The amalgamation of cultures, traditions and culinary diversity is what makes the tapestry of my Dominican American identity and its cuisine so profoundly unique and undeniably enticing. And to me, food tells the journey of our nation's people best. It reveals the essence of our ancestors and thoroughly embraces our Indigenous island persona, through zestiness and *sabor* (flavor).

By drawing on culinary delicacies, native wisdom and the influences of Spain, Africa and Latin America, Dominicans strung together their very own island cuisine. At some point, Dominicans began looking to our Peruvian and Spanish counterparts for practical culinary inspiration and happened upon ceviche—perhaps the most perfectly fresh, hyper-local summertime meal there is.

Ceviche is a delicacy that has been relished for centuries. In its bare-bones form, it is raw fish marinated and "cooked" in citrus

juice, typically lime or lemon. The acid in the citrus juice causes the proteins in the fish to break down, which gives it a cooked texture while retaining an enormous amount of flavor.

Just as the people of the Mediterranean look to the sea for its bounty, so do the people of the Caribbean. Ceviche originates in the coastal regions of Latin America, more specifically modern-day Peru, where it's touted as the national dish. From coast to coast, ceviche is enjoyed for its fresh ingredients, bright flavors and varying textures—and it has a special place in my heart.

When I think of ceviche, I think back to the stories of my father's childhood. When he was young, there was still a general lack of cold food storage and reliable electricity on the island. As a first-generation Dominican American, I heard stories about the power cutting out often. In his own words, "I had to resort to Flintstone-like innovations in order to maintain, prepare and preserve fresh food—especially fish." It's no wonder Dominicans welcomed Peru's national dish of ceviche, often served along our shores, in cafés and local households, as if it had its origins on Quisqueya [the island of the Dominican Republic and Haiti] itself. Thank you, Peru!

It's absolutely true what they say. Ceviche is bright, enticing and nourishing. After a long, sun-kissed summer day, I crave it. It's that perfect something that's light and refreshing and contrasts with the heavy heat of midsummer. I have found myself craving it while at the beach or at my very own Vermont homestead. It makes perfect sense that it found its sense of place in hot, tropical climates.

At Cafe Mamajuana, my Dominican fusion catering company, we offer a version of ceviche where we take an otherwise traditional Peruvian recipe and rejigger it to include some indigenous Dominican ingredients. These modifications give it a distinctly Caribbean taste that is a bit sexier and has more depth than your average lime-forward ceviche. I think it checks all the boxes. The nuttiness of the coconut milk, punch from the citrus juice and careful heat from the ají amarillo paste help bring this dish from the minor leagues straight into the major leagues—Dominican style! My ceviche recipe is an ode to culture, mixture and an open interpretation of colonialism, Indigenous food preservation and the sometimes hodgepodge food of the diaspora.

- **1½ pounds striped sea bass or other fresh sushi-grade fish, cut into ½- to 1-inch cubes**
- **¾ cup fresh lime juice (from about 8 limes)**
- **½ cup chopped red onion plus 1 cup thinly sliced, divided**
- **¼ cup coconut milk**
- **¼ cup tangerine juice (or orange juice)**
- **3 cloves garlic, peeled**
- **1 (1 inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled**
- **1 serrano pepper or other hot pepper, such as Fresno, jalapeño or habanero**
- **1 teaspoon ají amarillo paste (optional)**
- **½ cup chopped cucumber (optional)**
- **1 teaspoon salt**
- **½ teaspoon ground pepper, or to taste**
- **¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves**
- **¼ cup fresh mint leaves**

1. Combine 2 or 3 fish cubes, lime juice, chopped onion, coconut milk, tangerine (or orange) juice, garlic, ginger, serrano (or other hot pepper) and ají paste (if using) in a blender; puree until smooth. Pour into a large nonreactive bowl. Add the remaining fish and toss to coat. Stir in sliced onion, cucumber (if using), salt and pepper. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 4 hours.

2. Stir in cilantro and mint just before serving.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** ¾ CUP **CALORIES** 144 **CARBOHYDRATES** 8G **DIETARY FIBER** 1G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G **PROTEIN** 22G **TOTAL FAT** 3G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **CHOLESTEROL** 47MG **VITAMIN A** 421IU **VITAMIN C** 18MG **VITAMIN D** 260IU **VITAMIN E** 1MG **FOLATE** 23MCG **VITAMIN K** 3MCG **SODIUM** 471MG **CALCIUM** 55MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 57MG **POTASSIUM** 430MG **ZINC** 1MG **VITAMIN** B12 1MCG **OMEGA-3** 1G

CELEBRATE THE TIN

Canned and tinned seafood is sustainable, nutrient-dense and downright delicious. These quick recipes make eating seafood as easy as ever.

Tuna and Avocado Sandwiches

ACTIVE: 25 MIN **TOTAL:** 30 MIN

Adding chili crisp to the pesto adds delicious flavor, and processing the tuna with avocado creates a wonderfully creamy spread. This sandwich is packed with texture and flavor and will quickly make its way into your weekly lunch rotation.

- 1 (12 ounce) can water-packed tuna, drained
- ⅓ cup light mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 medium avocado, coarsely chopped, plus 1 medium avocado, thinly sliced, divided
- ½ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons refrigerated basil pesto
- 1 tablespoon chili crisp
- 8 slices whole-grain bread, toasted
- 1 pound ripe tomatoes, thinly sliced (about 16 slices)
- 2 cups baby butter lettuce leaves

1. Place tuna, mayonnaise, lemon juice, salt and half of the chopped avocado in a food processor; process on high, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed, until smooth and fluffy, about 1 minute. Stir in pepper. Transfer to a medium bowl; cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use.

2. Wash and dry the food processor bowl. Add pesto, chili crisp and the remaining half of the chopped avocado; process on high until smooth and creamy. Transfer to a small bowl.

3. Arrange toast on a work surface. Spread 1 tablespoon of the pesto mixture on each slice. Spread ½ cup of the tuna mixture on each of 4 slices over the pesto layer. Evenly layer sliced avocado, tomato slices and lettuce on top of the tuna mixture; top with the remaining toast slices, pesto side down. Cut the sandwiches into halves.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SANDWICH **CALORIES** 653 **CARBOHYDRATES** 44G **DIETARY FIBER** 16G **TOTAL SUGARS** 9G **PROTEIN** 35G **TOTAL FAT** 40G **SATURATED FAT** 6G **CHOLESTEROL** 35MG **VITAMIN A** 2041IU **VITAMIN C** 35MG **VITAMIN D** 1IU **VITAMIN E** 7MG **FOLATE** 183MCG **VITAMIN K** 68MCG **SODIUM** 709MG **CALCIUM** 137MG **IRON** 4MG **MAGNESIUM** 120MG **POTASSIUM** 1329MG **ZINC** 3MG **VITAMIN B12** 3MCG **OMEGA-3** 1G

Spicy Sardine Linguine

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 30 MIN

Rather than drain away the flavorful oil packed with the sardines, we stir it into the pasta along with the fish. Look for brands with the blue Marine Stewardship Council logo. Buying sardines with this certification ensures they're sourced from fisheries that keep fish populations and environmental impact in mind.

- **8 ounces whole-wheat linguine**
- **1 (4 ounce) can oil-packed boneless, skinless sardines**
- **2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- **2 large cloves garlic, grated**
- **5 jarred hot cherry peppers, seeded and coarsely chopped**
- **½ cup chopped fresh parsley**

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook pasta according to package directions. Reserve 1 cup cooking water, then drain the pasta and set aside; wipe the pot dry.

2. Meanwhile, drain sardines, reserving the oil. Halve the sardines lengthwise.

3. Add olive oil to the pot and heat over medium heat. Add garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add cherry peppers and the sardines and their oil; cook for 1 minute. Return the pasta to the pot, along with the reserved pasta water. Cook, tossing, until the water is mostly absorbed, about 1 minute. Add parsley and toss to combine.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP **CALORIES** 400 **CARBOHYDRATES** 43G **DIETARY FIBER** 6G **TOTAL SUGARS** 1G **PROTEIN** 13G **TOTAL FAT** 22G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 32MG **VITAMIN A** 781IU **VITAMIN C** 18MG **VITAMIN D** 43IU **VITAMIN E** 3MG **FOLATE** 14MCG **VITAMIN K** 124MCG **SODIUM** 460MG **CALCIUM** 122MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 13MG **POTASSIUM** 136MG **VITAMIN B12** 2MCG **OMEGA-3** 1G

Quick Lentil Salmon Salad

ACTIVE: 30 MIN **TOTAL:** 30 MIN

In this budget-friendly salmon recipe, canned salmon tops lentils, carrots and celery—ingredients you probably have on hand already. Fiber-rich lentils come in a variety of colors and they typically cook faster than dried beans, so they're a great choice for a fast weeknight dinner.

- ¾ cup brown lentils
- ½ cup chopped red onion plus ¼ cup thinly sliced, divided
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons red-wine vinegar
- ¾ teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 (15 ounce) can salmon, drained
- 1 cup carrot ribbons
- 1 cup sliced celery
- 4 lemon wedges for serving

1. Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil. Add lentils and chopped onion, reduce heat to maintain a lively simmer and cook until the lentils are just tender, 11 to 13 minutes. Drain well.

2. Meanwhile, mash garlic and salt into a paste with the side of a chef's knife (or a fork). Transfer to a medium bowl and whisk in oil, vinegar, thyme and pepper.

3. Remove any skin and/or bones from salmon; flake the salmon into a large bowl. Add sliced onion, carrot and 3 tablespoons of the dressing; gently toss to coat. Add celery and the lentils to the remaining dressing; gently stir to combine.

4. Divide the lentils among 4 bowls, top with the salmon salad and serve with lemon wedges.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 341 **CARBOHYDRATES** 25G
DIETARY FIBER 9G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G
PROTEIN 26G **TOTAL FAT** 15G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 24MG **VITAMIN A** 2202IU **VITAMIN C** 5MG **FOLATE** 204MCG
SODIUM 723MG **CALCIUM** 65MG **IRON** 5MG
MAGNESIUM 67MG **POTASSIUM** 529MG

Ginger-Soy Salmon Balls

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 35 MIN

These are perfect on their own, served alongside your favorite starch and veggies, or they make a great addition to a salad or grain bowl for a boost of protein. Canned salmon comes packed in water or oil—either will work as long as it's well drained. Be sure to get salmon packed without bones and skin for easy rolling.

- **2 (6 ounce) cans boneless, skinless salmon, drained well**
- **¼ cup panko breadcrumbs, preferably whole wheat**
- **1 large scallion, chopped**
- **1 large egg, lightly beaten**
- **1 tablespoon mayonnaise**
- **2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger**
- **1 tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce**

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat a large rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.

2. Combine salmon, panko, scallion, egg, mayonnaise and ginger in a large bowl. Stir, breaking up the salmon, until well mixed. With clean hands, roll the mixture into 16 balls, about 1½ tablespoons each; place on the prepared baking sheet. Bake, turning once, until firm and golden, about 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and drizzle with soy sauce, stirring to coat.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 4 BALLS
CALORIES 167 **CARBOHYDRATES** 5G
DIETARY FIBER 1G **TOTAL SUGARS** 0G
PROTEIN 19G **TOTAL FAT** 8G
SATURATED FAT 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 107MG
VITAMIN C 1MG **VITAMIN E** 1MG **SODIUM** 481MG **CALCIUM** 220MG **IRON** 1MG
MAGNESIUM 35MG **POTASSIUM** 309MG
ZINC 1MG

Skillet Tuna Noodle Casserole

ACTIVE: 40 MIN **TOTAL:** 40 MIN

Known as Tuna-Pea Wiggle to some, this family-friendly casserole tends to be made with canned soup and whole milk, which means high fat and sodium. We remedy this by making our own creamy mushroom sauce with nonfat milk thickened with a bit of flour. Look for whole-wheat egg noodles; they have more fiber than regular egg noodles (but this dish will work well and taste great with either).

- **8 ounces whole-wheat egg noodles**
- **1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil**
- **1 medium onion, finely chopped**
- **8 ounces mushrooms, sliced**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **½ cup dry white wine**
- **6 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- **3 cups nonfat milk**
- **½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper**
- **12 ounces canned chunk light tuna drained**
- **1 cup frozen peas, thawed**
- **1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, divided**
- **½ cup coarse dry whole-wheat breadcrumbs**

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook noodles until just tender, 6 to 8 minutes or according to package directions. Drain and rinse.
2. Position rack in upper third of oven and preheat broiler.
3. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large broiler-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion, mushrooms and salt and cook, stirring often, until the onion is softened but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add wine and cook until evaporated, 4 to 5 minutes. Sprinkle flour over the vegetables; stir to coat. Add milk and pepper and bring to a simmer, stirring constantly. Stir in tuna, peas and ½ cup Parmesan until evenly incorporated. Then, stir in the noodles (the pan will be very full). Remove from the heat.
4. Sprinkle the casserole with breadcrumbs and the remaining ½ cup Parmesan. Broil until bubbly and lightly browned on top, 3 to 4 minutes.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** 1⅓ CUPS
CALORIES 401 **CARBOHYDRATES** 46G **DIETARY FIBER** 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 9G **PROTEIN** 32G **TOTAL FAT** 8G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 53MG **VITAMIN A** 639IU **VITAMIN C** 6MG **FOLATE** 50MCG **SODIUM** 669MG **CALCIUM** 304MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 49MG **POTASSIUM** 576MG

Have a Snack

Between-meal bites don't have to throw you off your eating plan. These delicious snacks are filled with the nutrients found in the Mediterranean diet.

Seneca White Corn No-Bake Energy Balls

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 15 MIN

These get lots of staying power from a mix of oats and corn flour, peanut butter, coconut, dried fruit and mixed nuts. They're easily customizable by changing up the dried fruit and nuts. You can buy roasted white corn flour from the Congaree Milling Company online at thecongareemillingcompany.com.

- 1½ cups quick oats
- 1 cup roasted white corn flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup natural peanut butter
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup unsweetened coconut flakes, plus more for rolling
- ½ cup dried fruit, such as raisins and/or currants
- ½ cup unsalted roasted mixed chopped nuts, such as pecans, almonds, walnuts and/or hazelnuts

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Combine oats, corn flour, cinnamon and salt in a medium bowl. Stir in peanut butter, applesauce, maple syrup, 2 tablespoons water, honey and vanilla. Gently stir in coconut flakes, dried fruit and nuts.
3. With clean hands, roll the mixture into 1-inch balls, using about 1 heaping tablespoon to make each. (If the mixture is too dry to roll, stir in 1 tablespoon water.) Roll in more coconut, if desired.

SERVINGS 36 **SERVING SIZE** 1 ENERGY BALL **CALORIES** 77 **CARBOHYDRATES** 9G **DIETARY FIBER** 1G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G **ADDED SUGARS** 2G **PROTEIN** 2G **TOTAL FAT** 4G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **VITAMIN A** 1IU **FOLATE** 12MCG **SODIUM** 77MG **CALCIUM** 10MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 8MG **POTASSIUM** 32MG

Kale Chips

ACTIVE: 25 MIN **TOTAL:** 25 MIN

Not a fan of kale? These crispy baked chips will convert you! Kale chips should be crispy, not limp and soggy. To get the perfect texture, spread the kale out between two baking sheets. The leaves can touch, but they shouldn't overlap. If you have too much for two baking sheets, cook the kale in batches.

1 large bunch kale, tough stems removed, leaves torn into pieces (about 16 cups)
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
¼ teaspoon salt

1. Position racks in upper third and center of oven; preheat to 400°F.
2. If kale is wet, very thoroughly pat dry with a clean kitchen towel; transfer to a large bowl. Drizzle the kale with oil and sprinkle with salt. Using your hands, massage the oil and salt onto the kale leaves to evenly coat. Fill 2 large rimmed baking sheets with a layer of kale, making sure the leaves don't overlap. (If the kale won't all fit, make the chips in batches.)
3. Bake until most leaves are crisp, switching the pans back to front and top to bottom halfway through, 8 to 12 minutes total. (If baking a batch on just 1 sheet, start checking after 8 minutes to prevent burning.)

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT 2 CUPS **CALORIES** 110 **CARBOHYDRATES** 16G **DIETARY FIBER** 6G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G **PROTEIN** 5G **TOTAL FAT** 5G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **VITAMIN A** 38330IU **VITAMIN C** 115MG **FOLATE** 37MCG **SODIUM** 210MG **CALCIUM** 203MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 51MG **POTASSIUM** 642MG

Cauliflower Hummus

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 40 MIN

Is there anything cauliflower can't do? The versatile ingredient subs for chickpeas in this lightened-up version of hummus that's just as flavorful and zingy as the original.

- **6 cups cauliflower florets (about 1 pound)**
- **1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for garnish**
- **1 large garlic clove, roughly chopped**
- **¼ cup tahini**
- **Zest of 1 lemon**
- **2 tablespoons lemon juice**
- **½ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **½ teaspoon ground cumin**
- **½ teaspoon crushed red pepper**
- **2 tablespoons water**
- **Chopped red bell pepper for garnish**

1. Preheat oven to 400°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat. Toss cauliflower with oil in a large bowl. Spread in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet. Roast until tender and just starting to brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool to room temperature.

2. Add the cauliflower, garlic, tahini, lemon zest, lemon juice, salt, cumin, crushed red pepper and water to a food processor. Process until combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add more water, if desired, to make a looser dip.

3. Transfer to a bowl. Drizzle with additional olive oil and sprinkle with chopped pepper, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT ½ CUP
CALORIES 152 **CARBOHYDRATES** 10G
DIETARY FIBER 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G
PROTEIN 5G **TOTAL FAT** 12G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **VITAMIN A** 106IU **SODIUM** 280MG
POTASSIUM 426MG

Caprese Skewers

ACTIVE: 10 MIN **TOTAL:** 10 MIN

We took all the ingredients of a classic caprese salad and layered them onto skewers for a quick and fun snack.

- 16 small fresh mozzarella balls
- 16 fresh basil leaves
- 16 cherry tomatoes
- Extra-virgin olive oil to drizzle
- Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Thread mozzarella, basil and tomatoes on small skewers. Drizzle with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

SERVINGS 16 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SKEWER
CALORIES 46 **CARBOHYDRATES** 1G **DIETARY FIBER** 0G **TOTAL SUGARS** 0G **PROTEIN** 3G **TOTAL FAT** 3G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 8MG **VITAMIN A** 233IU **VITAMIN C** 2MG **FOLATE** 2MCG **SODIUM** 217MG **CALCIUM** 78MG **IRON** 0MG **MAGNESIUM** 2MG **POTASSIUM** 36MG

Crunchy Roasted Chickpeas

ACTIVE: 5 MIN **TOTAL:** 35 MIN

Try this satisfying snack instead of nuts. The tasty legumes are packed with fiber.

- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added chickpeas, rinsed
- Nonstick cooking spray
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt

Preheat oven to 425°F. Pat chickpeas dry with paper towels; place on a large rimmed baking sheet. Coat with cooking spray and sprinkle with salt. Bake until crunchy, 30 to 45 minutes.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ¼ CUP
CALORIES 100 **CARBOHYDRATES** 17G **DIETARY FIBER** 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G **PROTEIN** 6G **TOTAL FAT** 2G **SODIUM** 170MG

ONE POT WONDERS

Simplify after-dinner cleanup with meals that come together in a single pot or pan.

One-Pot Beans & Rice with Corn & Salsa

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 30 MIN

This is like a deconstructed burrito bowl, especially when topped with salsa, sliced avocado or a dollop of yogurt for a cool, creamy accent. You can also enjoy it as a vegetarian taco or burrito filling or a side dish on taco night.

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 cup long-grain rice
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 (14 ounce) can petite-diced tomatoes
- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, rinsed
- 1 cup frozen corn
- ½ cup chopped cilantro
- 3 tablespoons salsa and/or shredded Mexican blend cheese

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add rice and cook, stirring, until starting to brown, about 3 minutes.
2. Add onion, garlic, chili powder, cumin, salt and pepper; cook, stirring, until fragrant; 1 to 2 minutes. Add tomatoes and water; bring to a boil, then reduce heat to maintain a simmer. Cover and cook until the liquid has been absorbed, 18 to 20 minutes.
3. Remove from heat and fluff with a fork. Gently stir in beans and corn. Cover and let stand for 10 minutes. Stir in cilantro and serve with salsa and cheese, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS **CALORIES** 414 **CARBOHYDRATES** 72G **DIETARY FIBER** 12G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G **PROTEIN** 12G **TOTAL FAT** 9G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **VITAMIN A** 550IU **VITAMIN C** 21MG **FOLATE** 99MCG **SODIUM** 454MG **CALCIUM** 85MG **IRON** 4MG **MAGNESIUM** 118MG **POTASSIUM** 785MG

Rendang Jamur (Mushroom Rendang)

ACTIVE: 35 MIN
TOTAL: 1 HR 35 MIN

Rendang is one of Indonesia's most treasured foods. It originated with the Minangkabau people in West Sumatra, but families throughout the archipelago have their own versions of this richly spiced dish. It's often made with beef, but this vegetarian take leans into the meaty texture of oyster mushrooms (although you can use whatever mushrooms you can find).

- **2 medium shallots, coarsely chopped**
- **3 cloves garlic, smashed**
- **¼ cup chili paste, such as sambal oelek, or to taste**
- **¾ teaspoon salt, divided**
- **2 tablespoons canola oil or other neutral oil, such as coconut or avocado**
- **½ teaspoon ground cardamom**
- **¼ teaspoon Sichuan peppercorns or black peppercorns, coarsely ground**
- **1 (2 inch) cinnamon stick**
- **3 star anise**
- **1 pound oyster mushrooms, shredded into strips with your fingers**
- **1 (13 ounce) can coconut milk mixed with ½ cup water**
- **¼ cup tamarind water (see Tip) or 2 tablespoons lime juice**
- **2 lemongrass stalks, trimmed**
- **4 makrut lime leaves (optional)**
- **2 (½ inch) slices galangal or fresh ginger**
- **2 tablespoons coconut palm sugar or dark brown sugar**
- **2 cups hot cooked jasmine rice**

1. Pulse shallots, garlic, chili paste and ¼ teaspoon salt in a small food processor or blender until it's the texture of oatmeal, about 1 minute, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. (Alternatively, use a mortar and pestle.)
2. Heat oil in a large flat-bottom wok or skillet over medium-low heat until shimmering. Add the shallot mixture, cardamom, peppercorns, cinnamon stick and star anise; cook, stirring frequently, until the mixture is very fragrant and has turned a few shades darker, 5 to 7 minutes. (Reduce the heat if the paste is browning too fast; you don't want the paste to burn.) Once the moisture has evaporated, the ingredients will separate from the oil. The paste is now ready for the next step.
3. Add mushrooms and stir to coat with the spice paste. Add coconut milk-water mixture, tamarind water (or lime juice), lemongrass, lime leaves (if using), galangal (or ginger), sugar and the remaining ½ teaspoon salt; stir to combine. Bring to a gentle boil over medium heat, stirring constantly so the coconut milk doesn't split. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, stirring every 15 to 20 minutes, until most of the liquid has evaporated, forming a thick gravy, and oil pools on the surface of the rendang, 1 to 1½ hours. Toward the end of cooking, stir more frequently so the mixture doesn't stick.
4. Taste and adjust seasonings if necessary. Fish out and discard the whole herbs and spices, or leave them in for a rustic presentation. Serve over rice.

Tip: To make tamarind water, combine 1 ½ teaspoons seedless "wet" tamarind pulp with ¼ cup hot water. Stir and pour through a fine-mesh sieve, pressing on the solids to extract the liquid. Reserve the liquid and discard the solids. Tamarind in this form is sold in 1-pound plastic packages at Asian markets. If tamarind concentrate is all you can find, you may have to use up to twice as much. Taste as you go.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ½ CUP EACH RENDANG & RICE **CALORIES** 480 **CARBOHYDRATES** 56G **DIETARY FIBER** 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 12G **ADDED SUGARS** 8G **PROTEIN** 9G **TOTAL FAT** 28G **SATURATED FAT** 19G **VITAMIN A** 561U **VITAMIN C** 5MG **VITAMIN D** 331U **VITAMIN E** 1MG **FOLATE** 64MCG **VITAMIN K** 5MCG **SODIUM** 798MG **CALCIUM** 47MG **IRON** 6MG **MAGNESIUM** 70MG **POTASSIUM** 818MG **ZINC** 2MG **OMEGA-3** 1G

White Bean & Sun-Dried Tomato Gnocchi

ACTIVE: 20 MIN **TOTAL:** 20 MIN

Sun-dried tomatoes are the star of this recipe, providing texture and umami. Combined with the spinach, they make this dish a great source of vitamins C and K.

- ½ cup sliced oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes plus 2 tablespoons oil from the jar, divided
- 1 (16 ounce) package shelf-stable gnocchi
- 1 (15 ounce) can low-sodium cannellini beans, rinsed
- 1 (5 ounce) package baby spinach
- 1 large shallot, minced
- ⅓ cup low-sodium no-chicken broth or chicken broth
- ⅓ cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons fresh basil leaves

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add gnocchi and cook, stirring often, until plumped and starting to brown, about 5 minutes. Add beans and spinach and cook until the spinach is wilted, about 1 minute. Transfer to a plate.

2. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pan and heat over medium heat. Add sun-dried tomatoes and shallot; cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Increase heat to high and add broth. Cook until the liquid has mostly evaporated, about 2 minutes.

3. Reduce heat to medium and stir in cream, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Return the gnocchi mixture to the pan and stir to coat with the sauce. Serve topped with basil.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP **CALORIES** 437 **CARBOHYDRATES** 69G **DIETARY FIBER** 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G **PROTEIN** 14G **TOTAL FAT** 13G **SATURATED FAT** 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 23MG **VITAMIN A** 2995IU **SODIUM** 651MG **POTASSIUM** 481MG

One-Skillet Salmon with Fennel & Sun-Dried Tomato Couscous

ACTIVE: 30 MIN **TOTAL:** 40 MIN

Sun-dried tomato pesto and lemon do double duty to season both the salmon and the couscous in this recipe. Serve with extra lemon wedges and a dollop of plain yogurt, if desired.

- 1 lemon
- 1¼ pounds salmon, skinned and cut into 4 portions
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 4 tablespoons sun-dried tomato pesto, divided
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 medium fennel bulbs, cut into ½-inch wedges; fronds reserved
- 1 cup Israeli couscous, preferably whole-wheat
- 3 scallions, sliced
- 1½ cups low-sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup sliced green olives
- 2 tablespoons toasted pine nuts
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced

1. Zest lemon and reserve the zest. Cut the lemon into 8 slices. Season salmon with salt and pepper and spread 1½ teaspoons pesto on each piece.

2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add half the fennel; cook until brown on the bottom, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Reduce heat to medium and repeat with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and fennel. Transfer to the plate. Add couscous and scallions to the pan; cook, stirring frequently, until the couscous is lightly toasted, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in broth, olives, pine nuts, garlic, the reserved lemon zest and the remaining 2 tablespoons pesto.

3. Nestle the fennel and salmon into the couscous. Top the salmon with the lemon slices. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook until the salmon is cooked through and the couscous is tender, 10 to 14 minutes. Garnish with fennel fronds, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 4 OZ. SALMON & 1¼ CUPS COUSCOUS **CALORIES** 543 **CARBOHYDRATES** 46G **DIETARY FIBER** 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G **PROTEIN** 38G **TOTAL FAT** 24G **SATURATED FAT** 4G **CHOLESTEROL** 67MG **VITAMIN A** 1572IU **VITAMIN C** 24MG **FOLATE** 56MCG **SODIUM** 441MG **CALCIUM** 151MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 76MG **POTASSIUM** 1161MG

One-Pot Garlicky Shrimp & Broccoli

ACTIVE: 20 MIN **TOTAL:** 20 MIN

The shrimp and broccoli cook quickly in this easy recipe, making it perfect for busy weeknights. Serve it over whole grains or rice.

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 6 medium cloves garlic, sliced, divided
- 4 cups small broccoli florets
- ½ cup diced red bell pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 1 pound peeled and deveined raw shrimp (21–30 count)
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice, plus more to taste

1. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add half the garlic and cook until beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Add broccoli, bell pepper and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Cover and cook, stirring once or twice and adding 1 tablespoon water if the pot is too dry, until the vegetables are tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and keep warm.

2. Increase heat to medium-high and add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pot. Add the remaining garlic and cook until beginning to brown, about 1 minute. Add shrimp and the remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper; cook, stirring, until the shrimp are just cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes. Return the broccoli mixture to the pot along with lemon juice and stir to combine.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 CUP
CALORIES 214 **CARBOHYDRATES** 6G
DIETARY FIBER 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G
PROTEIN 25G **TOTAL FAT** 11G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 183MG
VITAMIN A 2074IU **SODIUM** 441MG
POTASSIUM 525MG

Dinner in 25 Minutes or Less

This weeklong New Mediterranean Diet dinner plan makes mealtime delicious and easy!

BY MARIA LAURA HADDAD-GARCIA
Reviewed by Dietitian Victoria Seaver, M.S., RD

Whenever I'm at my parents' house, I'm automatically on dinner duty. Unlike me, my mom cooks more out of necessity rather than pleasure. So whenever I'm in my hometown, she takes advantage of that. And while I love to cook delicious and nutritious meals for my family, I also like spending time with them—and I especially cherish the meaningful conversations that always happen around dinner. That's where these 25-minute Mediterranean dinners come in handy.

Research has shown that the Mediterranean diet can help reduce your risk of chronic diseases, increase longevity, support your cognitive function and more. Contrary to popular belief, the principles of the Mediterranean diet can be applied to any cuisine, not only those traditional in the Mediterranean region. To reap the benefits of this eating pattern, focus on incorporating lots of fruits and veggies, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats.

Sunday's Quick Chicken Fajitas are the perfect weekend dinner for my family—a nostalgic recipe that takes me on a trip down memory lane. Growing up, whenever we took my grandpa out to dinner at his favorite local restaurant, he always ordered chicken fajitas. Although it isn't a traditional dish of the Mediterranean region, the ingredients it features, such as corn tortillas, veggies, avocado and chicken, fit the diet's principles. This recipe uses quick-cooking thin chicken strips to keep the total cook time to 20 minutes. Spices like chili powder and cumin add lots of delicious Northern Mexican flavor. Finally, topping the fajitas with lemon juice, cilantro and sour cream perfectly balances them out.

Sunday: Quick Chicken Fajitas

Monday: Kung Pao Tofu

Tuesday: Garlic Shrimp with Cilantro Spaghetti Squash, paired with whole-wheat baguette

Wednesday: Grilled Chicken & Vegetable Salad with Chickpeas & Feta

Thursday: Crispy Cod with Charred Snow Peas & Creamy Herb Sauce, with a side of quinoa

Friday: Sheet-Pan Caprese Pizza

SUNDAY

Quick Chicken Fajitas

ACTIVE: 20 MIN **TOTAL:** 20 MIN

These quick and easy fajitas are perfect for a casual, fun get-together. You could even set up a make-your-own-fajitas bar with the chicken filling, avocado cream, sour cream and any other toppings you love, like pico de gallo, sliced fresh jalapeños or crisp radish slices. The recipe serves four, but you can easily double it to feed a larger crowd. For a fast, simple side, combine shredded red or green cabbage, toasted hulled pumpkin seeds (pepitas), and crumbled queso fresco. Toss with a simple dressing of lime juice and olive oil.

- 8 (6 inch) corn tortillas
- 1½ teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1½ cups thinly sliced red and orange bell pepper (about 1 small of each)
- 1½ cups thinly sliced red onion
- 1½ ripe peeled avocados
- 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup light sour cream (optional)
- 3 tablespoons cilantro leaves (optional)
- 4 lime wedges

1. Working with 1 tortilla at a time, heat tortillas over medium-high heat in a large, dry skillet for about 20 seconds on each side or until lightly charred. Wrap tortillas in foil; keep warm.

2. Combine chili powder, cumin, ¼ teaspoon salt and black pepper in a bowl. Add chicken; toss to coat. Heat pan over medium-high heat. Add oil; swirl. Add chicken; cook 3 minutes. Add bell peppers and onion; cook 5 minutes or until vegetables are softened and chicken is done, stirring occasionally.

3. Place avocados in a bowl; coarsely mash with a fork. Add remaining ¼ teaspoon salt and lime juice, stirring to combine. Divide chicken mixture among tortillas; top evenly with avocado mixture. Top evenly with sour cream and cilantro, if desired. Serve with lime wedges.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 2 FAJITAS **CALORIES** 413 **CARBOHYDRATES** 43G **TOTAL SUGARS** 5G **PROTEIN** 29G **TOTAL FAT** 16G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 73MG **SODIUM** 477MG **CALCIUM** 62MG **IRON** 1MG

MONDAY

Kung Pao Tofu

ACTIVE: 25 MIN **TOTAL:** 25 MIN

Kung pao sauce is typically made with dark soy sauce and sugar—we lightened it up in calories but kept the dark color by swapping in a touch of molasses. Cooking the tofu and vegetables over high heat means they get crisp on the outside but stay tender in the center.

- 1 (14 to 16 ounce) package extra-firm tofu
- 3 tablespoons reduced-sodium tamari or soy sauce, divided
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch plus 2 teaspoons, divided
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine or dry sherry
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon molasses or sugar
- 3 tablespoons peanut or canola oil, divided
- 6 small dried red Chinese chile peppers or ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 scallion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
- 1 large red bell pepper, chopped (about 2 cups)
- 1 large green bell pepper, chopped (about 2 cups)
- ½ medium yellow onion, chopped (¾ cup)
- 2 stalks celery, chopped (¾ cup)
- ¼ cup unsalted dry-roasted peanuts

1. Pat tofu dry and cut into ¾-inch cubes. Gently pat dry again. In a medium bowl, toss with 1 tablespoon each tamari (or soy sauce) and cornstarch. Set aside.

2. Whisk water, the remaining 2 tablespoons tamari (or soy sauce), Shaoxing (or sherry), rice vinegar, sesame oil, molasses (or sugar) and the remaining 2 teaspoons cornstarch in a small bowl. Place next to the stove.

3. Heat 1½ tablespoons peanut (or canola) oil in a large flat-bottom wok or cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tofu in a single layer; cook, undisturbed, until golden brown on one side, about 1 minute. Stir and continue cooking until all sides are golden brown, about 3 minutes more. Transfer the tofu to a bowl.

4. Add the remaining 1½ tablespoons peanut (or canola) oil to the pan. Add chiles (or crushed red pepper), scallion, garlic and ginger; cook for 10 seconds. Add red bell pepper, green bell pepper, onion, celery and peanuts; cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, about 4 minutes. Stir the sauce and add it to the pan with the tofu. Cook, stirring, until the sauce thickens and the tofu and vegetables are coated with sauce, about 1 minute.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 326 **CARBOHYDRATES** 17G
DIETARY FIBER 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G
ADDED SUGARS 1G **PROTEIN** 15G **TOTAL FAT** 23G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **VITAMIN A** 1693IU
VITAMIN C 88MG **VITAMIN E** 3MG **FOLATE** 45MCG **VITAMIN K** 19MCG **SODIUM** 551MG
CALCIUM 110MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 35MG **POTASSIUM** 341MG **ZINC** 1MG

TUESDAY

Garlic Shrimp with Cilantro Spaghetti Squash

ACTIVE: 25 MIN **TOTAL:** 25 MIN

Garlicky shrimp are served on top of buttery, cilantro-flecked spaghetti squash in this quick, healthy recipe inspired by shrimp scampi. Pair with a side of sautéed greens, such as kale, collards or spinach.

- 1 2½- to 3-pound spaghetti squash, halved lengthwise and seeded
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ⅓ cup dry white wine, such as pinot grigio
- 1 pound peeled and deveined raw shrimp (16–20 per pound), tails left on if desired
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- Lemon wedges for serving

1. Place squash cut side down in a microwave-safe dish; add 2 tablespoons water. Microwave, uncovered, on high until the flesh is tender, about 10 minutes. (Alternatively, place squash halves cut side down on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake in a 400°F oven until the squash is tender, 40 to 50 minutes.)

2. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic, coriander, cumin, ¼ teaspoon salt and cayenne; cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Add wine and bring to a simmer. Add shrimp and cook, stirring, until the shrimp are pink and just cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice.

3. Use a fork to scrape the squash from the shells into a medium bowl. Add cilantro, butter, pepper and the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt; stir to combine. Serve the shrimp over the spaghetti squash with a lemon wedge on the side.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ⅔ CUP SHRIMP & ¾ CUP SQUASH **CALORIES** 266 **CARBOHYDRATES** 10G **DIETARY FIBER** 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G **PROTEIN** 24G **TOTAL FAT** 14G **SATURATED FAT** 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 198MG **VITAMIN A** 627IU **VITAMIN C** 7MG **FOLATE** 11MCG **SODIUM** 450MG **CALCIUM** 112MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 56MG **POTASSIUM** 473MG

WEDNESDAY

Grilled Chicken & Vegetable Salad with Chickpeas & Feta

ACTIVE: 25 MIN **TOTAL:** 25 MIN

Fresh herbs, olives and feta cheese give this grilled chicken and vegetable salad its distinct flavor. On a beautiful evening when you don't want to be indoors in the kitchen, fire up the grill, and in 25 minutes, dinner is served.

- 4 (6 ounce) skinless, boneless chicken breasts
- 1 medium red onion, cut crosswise into ½-inch rounds
- 1 large yellow squash, cut lengthwise into ½-inch planks
- Cooking spray
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
- 1½ tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 cup quartered cherry tomatoes
- 1 cup drained and rinsed no-salt-added chickpeas
- 1½ ounces feta cheese, crumbled (about ⅓ cup)
- 8 pitted Kalamata olives, halved

1. Preheat grill to medium (350°F to 400°F). Lightly coat chicken, onion, and squash with cooking spray. Sprinkle chicken with pepper and ¼ teaspoon of the salt. Place chicken on oiled (with cooking spray) grates; grill, uncovered, turning occasionally, until a thermometer inserted in thickest portion of meat registers 165°F, about 8 minutes. Remove from grill. Place onion and squash on oiled (with cooking spray) grates; grill, uncovered, until lightly charred and softened, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Remove from grill.

2. In a large bowl, whisk together dill, oregano, oil, vinegar and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt. Add tomatoes, chickpeas, feta and olives; toss to coat. Coarsely chop onion and squash; add to mixture and toss to coat. Serve immediately with grilled chicken.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 398 **CARBOHYDRATES** 17G
DIETARY FIBER 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G
PROTEIN 45G **TOTAL FAT** 15G **SATURATED FAT** 4G **SODIUM** 587MG

THURSDAY

Crispy Cod with Charred Snow Peas & Creamy Herb Sauce

ACTIVE: 20 MIN **TOTAL:** 20 MIN

This recipe shows you how to make golden fish that's not deep-fried to put a healthy twist on a classic. Pat it dry and dredge it with a bit of flour before sautéing in a hot pan.

- **3 tablespoons minced fresh herbs, such as chives, mint, basil and/or dill**
- **2 tablespoons buttermilk**
- **2 tablespoons mayonnaise**
- **Pinch of salt plus ½ teaspoon, divided**
- **½ teaspoon ground pepper, divided**
- **1¼ pounds cod, cut into 4 pieces**
- **2 tablespoons white whole-wheat flour**
- **2 tablespoons grapeseed oil, divided**
- **1 pound snow peas, trimmed**

1. Whisk herbs, buttermilk, mayonnaise, pinch of salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper in a small bowl. Set aside.

2. Pat fish dry with paper towels and sprinkle with the remaining ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Toss with flour in a medium bowl.

3. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the fish and cook, turning occasionally, until lightly browned on all sides and cooked through, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

4. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and snow peas to the pan. Cook until lightly charred on one side, about 1 minute. Stir and continue cooking until bright green and tender, about 1 minute more.

5. Serve the fish and snow peas with the reserved sauce.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 4 OZ. COD, ½ CUP SNOW PEAS & 1 TBSP. SAUCE
CALORIES 270 **CARBOHYDRATES** 11G **DIETARY FIBER** 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G **PROTEIN** 26G **TOTAL FAT** 13G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 57MG **VITAMIN A** 267IU **VITAMIN C** 26MG **FOLATE** 10MCG **SODIUM** 462MG **CALCIUM** 80MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 43MG **POTASSIUM** 264MG

FRIDAY

Sheet-Pan Caprese Pizza

ACTIVE: 15 MIN **TOTAL:** 25 MIN

This light and flavorful caprese pizza is ready when the tomatoes are just heated through and the mozzarella is slightly melted. If you want a little more on this pizza, it'd be delicious with a few slices of prosciutto. Chef's tip: Let your dough come up to room temperature before you stretch it—it'll be much easier to work with.

- **1 pound fresh prepared whole-wheat pizza dough**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **¾ teaspoon kosher salt, divided**
- **½ teaspoon black pepper, divided**
- **8 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, thinly sliced**
- **2 cups baby heirloom tomatoes, halved or quartered**
- **½ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves**
- **2 tablespoons balsamic glaze**

1. Place a 17x12-inch baking sheet in oven; preheat oven to 450°F. Stretch pizza dough into a 15x10-inch rectangle on a large sheet of parchment paper. Brush dough evenly with oil; sprinkle with ½ teaspoon of the salt and ¼ teaspoon of the pepper. Transfer to hot baking sheet in preheated oven. Bake until crust starts to brown, about 10 minutes.

2. Remove from oven; top evenly with cheese and tomatoes. Return to oven; bake until cheese just melts, about 2 minutes.

3. Remove from oven. Sprinkle with basil and remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper; drizzle with glaze. Slice into 6 pieces.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SLICE
CALORIES 309 **CARBOHYDRATES** 37G
DIETARY FIBER 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 4G
PROTEIN 13G **TOTAL FAT** 14G **SATURATED FAT** 6G **SODIUM** 584MG

EatingWell

The New Mediterranean Diet

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Date Night

Native to the subtropical and tropical regions of the Middle East and North Africa, dates are the edible fruits that emerge from the blossoming yellow flowers on date palm trees. Dates are commonly referred to as "nature's candy" for a reason. One bite of this delectable fruit releases a sweet and deeply rich flavor reminiscent of caramel. Dates are packed with powerful plant compounds called polyphenols that may help prevent vascular diseases such as atherosclerosis, myocardial infarction and coronary artery disease. Dates are rich in phenolic compounds, active ingredients in plants that can act as antioxidants and fight pathogens in the body. Research published in 2019 in the *Journal of Pharmacy and BioAllied Sciences* showed that the antioxidant activity of dates is highest when they are in the ripening stage of growth.

EatingWell® (ISSN 1046-1639). April (Summer) 2024. Volume 22, No. 2. *EatingWell* is published quarterly by Meredith Operations Corp., 1716 Locust St., Des Moines, IA 50309-3023. Periodicals postage pending at Des Moines, IA, and at additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTION PRICES: $20 per year in the U.S.; $40 (U.S. dollars) in Canada. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.15.2.) NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address corrections to *EatingWell*, P.O. BOX 37508, Boone, IA 50037-0508. In Canada: mailed under Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 40069223; Canadian BN 12348 2887 RT. Your bank may provide updates to the card information we have on file. You may opt out of this service at any time. If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless corrected delivery information is received within two years. EatingWell is a registered trademark in the United States. © Meredith Operations Corp. 2024. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

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Fresh Perspectives

The New Mediterranean Diet has the same science-backed principles as the original, but with an expanded scope that covers foods from across the globe and celebrates the health and wellness of all cultures.